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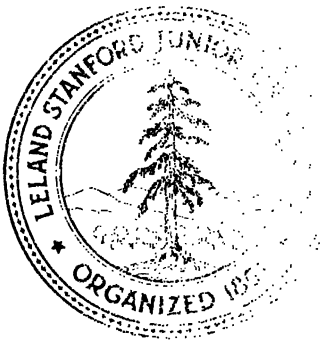
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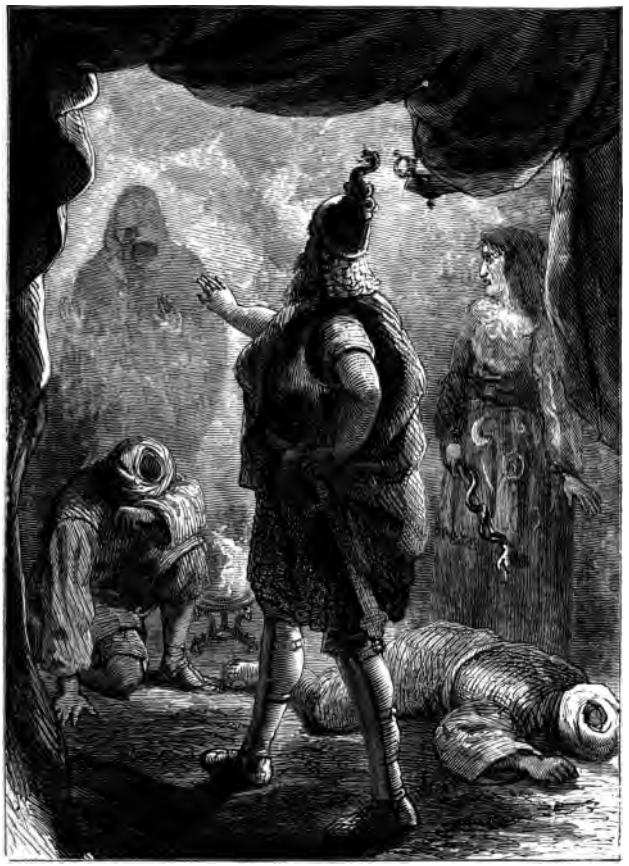
# KING SAUL: A TRAGEDY.

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Back to the shades of death, thou perjured ghost;
Thou liest! Go breathe damnation on the lost.

*Act IV, Scene III, p. 122.*

# KING SAUL.

## A TRAGEDY.

By BYRON A. BROOKS.

NEW YORK:
NELSON & PHILLIPS.
CINCINNATI:
HITCHCOCK & WALDEN.
1876.

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## TO MY READERS:

TO ONE WHO ASSISTED IN ITS INCEPTION AND
PROGRESS;

TO THOSE FRIENDS TO WHOSE CRITICISM IT WAS FIRST SUBMITTED;

AND TO YOU WHO NOW READ;

This Volume is Respectfully Dedicated,

IN THE HOPE THAT ITS PERUSAL MAY MAKE US ALL FRIENDS,
UNITED BY THE UNSEEN BONDS OF THOUGHT
THAT LINK CONGENIAL MINDS.

THE AUTHOR.

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THE AUTHOR.

# PREFACE.

THIS is not an historical drama, merely illustrating the Scripture narrative, nor a dramatic poem. It is a tragedy. The essence of tragedy is the will of man at war with a supreme will—the tragedy of life. This is powerfully shown in the Greek tragedy, as in "Œdipus, the King," of Sophocles. But there is this difference between the Greek and the modern tragedy. The former shows the human will struggling against fate—often a blind and unjust fate. In the modern tragedy the Supreme Will is not less powerful, but always good; while man is not less willful, but always wrong. The lesson of the former is to submit to the inevitable; that of the latter—the lesson of all history and revelation, not contradicted by modern science—is God's rule over nations and in the affairs of men. This is strongly exemplified in the life and death of the first king of Israel, who towers above all other monarchs, as his form was "head and shoulders" above all common men.

Says an eminent critic in a recent review of Alfieri's "Saul," "His is a royal and regally-poised nature, that has first been undermined by sin and the consciousness of sin, then crazed by contact with the spirit-world, and by a nameless dread of the impending anger of an offended God."

I have also chosen this subject, that in so remote a period in the history of man we may find him untrammeled by the artificial conditions of modern society, and behold the natural and spontaneous expression of the emotions, which in modern life are concealed and suggested only by the efforts made to suppress them. I have also wished to avoid the old classic mine for subject and illustration, and have thus confined myself for ornament to the great field of external nature as an expression of human nature, and to such a use of it as would readily occur to strong though untutored minds familiar with her various aspects. It is also a period in which man was near to the spirit-world, and thus the introduction of the supernatural in the drama will not appear unnatural. I have not hesitated to sacrifice portions of the history to dramatic unity, and to introduce other elements, such as the plots of Abner, and some of the scenes between David and Saul's younger daughter, which, I trust, will be found consistent with the spirit of the original, and also contributive to the end as well as the interest of the drama. I know well that the subject demands an abler hand, but I humbly add my page to the great volume portraying man to man.

B. A. B.

NEW YORK, *October* 10, 1876.

# DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

SAUL, *King of Israel.*

DAVID, *a Shepherd Lad, anointed to be King.*

ABNER, *Captain of the Host.*

JONATHAN,
ISHBOSHETH, } *Sons of Saul.*

SAMUEL, *the Prophet of God.*

JESSE, *Father of David.*

ELIAB,
ABINADAB, } *Brethren of David.*

ABISHAI, *Friend of David.*

RECHAB, *an Assassin.*

SARAH,
RACHEL, } *Daughters of Saul.*

ELIZABETH, *Mother of David.*

*Witch of Endor.*

*Ghost of Samuel.*

*Chorus of Hebrew Women.*

*Officers, Soldiers, Armor-Bearers, Elders, Messengers, Prophets, Fugitives, Attendants, etc.*

SCENE—*in various parts of Palestine.*



# KING SAUL.

## PROLOGUE.

*Scene.*—A PLAIN NEAR THE VILLAGE OF BETHLEHEM.

(*Samuel before a burning altar, sacrificing.*)

SAMUEL.

LORD, here am I, in Bethlehem, prepared
To do thy will, and pour the anointing oil
On him thou call'st to rule o'er Israel.
My soul is cleft in twain by love and fear.
I love thy servant, Saul, by thee first called
To rule our race, by me anointed first;
Yet dread his wrath if he should know this thing,
For then I die. Still more I stand in awe
Of Israel's God. I dare not disobey
The word of Him who rules omnipotent
In heaven and o'er the nations of the earth.
No man can stay thine arm. Thou canst cast down
Thine own elect, and from earth's lowest raise
A king to do thy will. Be it not mine
To reason why, or question thy decrees.
Let wrathful Saul strike down this aged dust,
And blot my name from Israel. Thy will
Be done.

A VOICE.

Be still, and know that I am God.

(*Samuel bows in silence. Enter elders of the town.*)

FIRST ELDER.

We tremble at thy coming, seer, and seek
To know what it doth bode to Bethlehem.

SECOND ELDER.

Dost thou come peaceably?

SAMUEL.

Yea, peaceably.
I come to sacrifice unto the Lord.
Now sanctify yourselves, and come with me
To sacrifice. Call Jesse and his sons.

FIRST ELDER.

They, too, have seen this flame, and come this way.

(*Enter Jesse and his sons.*)

SAMUEL. (*Looking on Eliab.*)

The Lord's anointed is before him now!

THE VOICE.

Look, Samuel, not upon his countenance,
Or stature tall; for him have I refused.
Jehovah seeth not as man, for man
Beholdeth but appearances of things;
God looketh on the heart.

(*Abinadab passes before Samuel.*)

SAMUEL.

Nor hath the Lord
Selected this.

(*Shammah passes by.*)

Nor hath he chosen this.

(*Jesse's other sons pass by.*)

These, neither, hath God called. Jesse, are all
Thy children here?

JESSE.

All, man of God, save one;
And he, my latest born, doth keep the sheep.

SAMUEL.

Send and fetch him, for we will not sit down,
Till he come here. This day hath honor come
Unto thy house. In time to come I see
Kings, potentates, and princes rise and call
Thee sire; thy name forever linked with his,
Great offspring of thy loins.

(*Enter David.*)

JESSE.

Behold! he comes.

THE VOICE.

Arise, anoint the lad, for this is he.

SAMUEL. (*To David.*)

Though I perceive a ruddy youth thou art
And ill prepared to bear the weight I bring,
God's voice hath spoken.

(*Anoints David.*)

David, Jesse's son;
Our fathers' God, the God of Abraham,
Of Isaac, and of Jacob, now doth call
Thee from thy flocks, to lead his chosen race.
Their royal shepherd thou shalt be, to guard,
And guide them to the sacred city's fold.

In visions dim time's vail is rent. I see
Prophetic fingers point to thee, and on
Through thee to One, the Son of God, and Son
Of David ; born, like thee, in Bethlehem ;
The great Anointed, King of heaven and earth.

DAVID.

O holy man, I tremble at thy words.
I hear thy voice, as when the night wind sways
The sighing trees, but wist not what it says.
My soul is moved by thoughts unutterable,
Yet knows not why. No more can I return
To Bethlehem's hills to tend my flocks, or watch
At night Orion and the Pleiads rise,
In peaceful contemplation wrapt ; for thoughts
Will come of this day and thy solemn words
With boding expectation fraught.

SAMUEL.

Fear not ;
For though the heavens and earth shall pass away,
God's word shall stand. What he conceives, is done.
His hand hath loosed the rocky mass that hung
Upon the mountain's edge, which gathering might,
And thundering as it rolls, will smite and crush
Whate'er oppose, nor pause until it rests,
At last, in lowest vale.

DAVID.

O, man of God,
Thy weighty words, dropped in mine ear, disturb
Mine inmost soul, like rocks from crumbling crags
That plunge into the quiet pool and make

The strange commotion felt to farthest shore.
My every sense is roused with unborn fears,
Misgivings strange, and aspirations vague.

SAMUEL.

The spirit of the Lord be with thee. Go!

JESSE.

O, Samuel, stay and bless our coast.

SAMUEL.

My work
Is done. The prophet's words are ended. Go!

DAVID.

Prophet of Israel, farewell!

SAMUEL.

Go, go!

[*Exeunt all but Samuel.*

God! wilt thou unappeasably pursue
In wrath thy servant, Saul, my friend and king,
And cast him down to death for one offense,
In that he executed not thy will
On Amalek? Wilt in his stead anoint
This youth? No more can I behold his face.
I go to hide me from my people's sight,
And leave the end with thee. I have proclaimed
Thy will, the doom of Saul, though every word
Hath rent my bleeding heart to give it birth;
For thou hast taught obedience is more
To thee than sacrifice, and willing hearts
Than fat of rams. Yet, O, let not thy wrath
Be kindled 'gainst thy servant for these tears

Of human sympathy. Thou art not man
That thou shouldst feel repentance. Thou dost work
Thy will unmoved, and lead'st the nations bound
And subject to thine everlasting law.
Jehovah maketh poor and maketh rich:
Jehovah bringeth low, and lifteth up.
He raiseth up the poor out of the dust,
And lifteth up the beggar from the mire,
And setteth them 'mong princes, and doth make
Them heirs unto the glory of the throne.
For all the pillars of the earth are his,
And he hath set the whole round world upon them.

[*Exit.*

# ACT I.

*Scene I.*—BETHLEHEM.—*A field before the dwelling of Jesse —Flocks feeding in the distance.*

(*Enter David and Jesse.*)

JESSE.

My son, take thou this ephah of parched corn,
And these ten loaves, and carry to thy brethren
In camp at Elah. Haste! See how they fare,
And take their pledge; for now are all the men
Of Israel, with Saul, our king, gone out
To battle with our old Philistine foe.
But thou and I, youth and old age, remain
Upon the peaceful margins of life's stream,
Between which rolls the raging flood of wars,
Ambitions, passions, and all strifes of men.
These shriveled hands, which have not always held
The shepherd's crook, again would wield the sword
Against the enemies of God. Alas!
I now can only pray for Israel's cause.

DAVID.

My father, let me join my country's ranks;
My arm is strong, my heart is bold,—

JESSE.

What! thou,
My youngest and my dearest, whom so late
I held upon my knee and taught to lisp
Thy country's name? Why, boy, thou dream'st!

DAVID.

'Tis thou,
My sire, that dost forget how rapidly
The changing moons have waxed and waned, and each
Has added to my stature and my strength.
And yet, last night, upon my bed, I dreamed,
And saw a vision strange. I fell asleep,
With thoughts—which oft perplex my waking mind—
Of Samuel's words and solemn act, and what
They bode to me and thee, and all our race.
Methought I heard again the prophet's voice.
He said, "David, arise! The hour is come!"
I rose and followed him into the night,
And felt my heart dilate at every step.
The moon was sinking 'neath the hill up which
I lead my flocks, and seemed to cast o'er all
A sickly glare, as struggling in eclipse:
Or was it what I there beheld, that half
Obscured her beams? For there a spectral form
Of awful aspect stood, stern, towering high
As heaven, its shadow darkening all the plain.
It grasped a spear like some majestic fir
Beneath whose shade at noon our flocks find rest,
And brandished wild its arms, as giant oaks
When tempests tear their leaves and toss their limbs
Awry. My leader said, "Go forth and fight;
Thou shalt prevail." A new-born courage filled
My heart, and fear took flight. Forward I rushed,
When, lo! the specter vanished. Where it stood
Appeared a form more fair than aught on earth,
And said, "I come to lead thee to a throne."
Impelled by admiration, hope, and love,
I followed her. She led into a wood,

So dense and dark, that in the deep'ning gloom
My lovely guide soon disappeared. Alarmed,
I sought escape. But now each trunk became
A mailéd man, and every branch a spear
Aimed at my heart. O'erwhelmed, I called on God,—
And woke.

JESSE.

Thou dream'st of wars and women, then!
Thou'lt be a man ere long.

DAVID.

I am a man.
Not years make men, but thoughts, and hope, and love,
And ponderings deep on all the mysteries
Of life and nature. These have been my thoughts
From childhood's hour: Why was I made? For what
This God-like form, excelling every work
Of man's, and prisoning here a breath of God's,
That seeks his breast again? Is being all?
Existence but a striving to exist?
Man's end no higher than the driven herd's?
Better their state, without his pains and passions;
Far better not to be. God's pride is man:
But I would rather be the merest waif
That floats obedient to its maker's will,
Than call myself a man, and yet not feel
Heaven-born ambition! God hath given each soul
A power and call to do some noble work,
And make all life sublime. My soul aspires
To do, and doing grandly, truly live.
Oft, when alone, my shepherd's reed I've tuned,
The heavenly influence of harmonious sounds
Hath borne my soul aloft on spirit wings

So far from earth that it hath disappeared,
And I have lost my kinship with mankind.
And when, at night, from some lone mountain-top,
I've watched the silent stars come slowly forth
To claim converse with me, the long, still night
Hath been an age of ecstasy, till day
Hath rudely hid their eyes and driven me back
To this contracted earth. Here must I work;
Now is the time. A voice hath whispered "Wait!
God's work for thee is great." But I have heard
The prophet's words, and felt the anointing oil
Poured on my head. The hour decreed is come:
Now let me haste to join our country's ranks.
My father, I'm an older man than thou!

JESSE.

My child, my child!—I have no more a child!
Son,—David,—what shall I name thee? Alas!
I know not what! These strange, foreboding words,
This fearful dream, the oracle of God—
All body forth this end—thou'rt mine no more!
This morn the tenderest offspring of my stock
Thou wert, of budding promise full, to stay
And twine about my lonely age, since war
Hath rudely wrenched my other scions, all,
From out paternal soil to prop the State.
But this, I fondly hoped, would flourish here,
Beneath whose shade my aged limbs might rest,
And there, at last, be gathered up in death.
O God, 'tis all a dream! I wake to weep!
Thy going, son, I cannot stay; but, O,
Before we part bequeath thy sire this pledge,
That thou'lt return.

And must I ever see
This tender form, these gentle arms, encased
In rugged brass? These hands, that only know
The shepherd's crook, armed with death-drinking spear
And war's resounding shield? Must this pure brow,
Where white-robed innocence yet sits enthroned,
Be soiled and stained with battle dust and blood,
And, O! perhaps deep scarred with war's rude seams?
God shut that vision from my burning sight!
O David, *Dear* thou'rt named, and dear thou art
As apple of mine eye. Wilt thou not grant
Thy sire one promise? Say thou wilt return;
Then take my blessing.

DAVID.

Father, I'll return.
The Lord, who called our father Abraham
Out from his land to dwell in deserts wild,
And gave him richest promise, calls me too.
Thou heard'st the prophet's words, perchance discerned'st
Their end: I only feel their weight, and hear
The inward voice. Thou taught'st me to obey
Thy word and God's; I go, but I'll return.

JESSE.

God's blessing go with thee, my son, my son!

(*Exit David.*)

In truth the Spirit of the Lord is here,
And calls him from my side. I thank thee, God,
For such a son. O, shield him from all ill! (*Exit.*)

*Scene II.*—A CAMP.—*Soldiers passing to and fro, preparing for battle.*

(*Enter David.*)

DAVID. (*To the guard.*)
Can'st tell me, man, where Jesse's sons are camped?
They are of Judah's tribe.

FIRST SOLDIER.
Abinadab,
And Eliab?

DAVID.
The same.

FIRST SOLDIER.
Thou hast not far
To go. Thy brethren dwell in yonder tent.
But stop. Let me advise thine ignorance.

DAVID.
I have no time for idle words.

FIRST SOLDIER.
'Tis well.
Then make thy visit brief.

DAVID.
And for what cause?

FIRST SOLDIER.
Dost wish to see thy sire again?

DAVID.
I do.

FIRST SOLDIER.

Then tell thy message with dispatch.

DAVID.

And why?

FIRST SOLDIER.

The lion's lair is no retreat for kids.
But hither come thy brethren.

DAVID. (*Saluting his brethren.*)

Hail, brethren!
Our father, Jesse, bade me bring to you
These tokens of his care, and take your pledge—
Lock from your head, or other sign that you
Still dwell among the living and are well.
So rising up this morn, ere night's black robe
Was streaked with gray, I left my white-wooled flocks
To stranger's care, and hastened to the camp.
I joy to see you still alive and well.

ABINADAB.

Our father, the old man, is he yet well?

DAVID.

He was this morn, when I left Bethlehem.

ELIAB.

Gave he no other message?

DAVID.

None: except
That I return with haste to bring report.

ELIAB.

Then haste, and stand not here with wandering eye
Turned toward these warlike preparations. Boy,
They fit not thee.

DAVID.

Why lingers Israel's host
Before this godless crew, and hastens not
To sweep them utterly from earth?

ABINADAB.

Thou speak'st
Like one that ne'er hast seen a hostile shape
More dread than lurking fox or prowling bear.
Thou hast not seen this man that is come up
Defying Israel, the champion
Of Gath, who day by day his challenge makes
With boastings loud, reviling Israel's God.

DAVID.

And is there none to take away this shame
From Israel?

SECOND SOLDIER.

But, O, he is a monster!

ABINADAB.

One look would make thee quake, and wish thou ne'er
Hadst left thy peaceful hills.

SECOND SOLDIER.

His face is like
The gnarléd roots of blasted oak, his teeth
Like tusks of savage boar; and when he speaks,
'Tis as a lion roars.

ABINADAB.

Coward, thou seest
With eyes of fear, and speak'st with vagrant tongue;
Yet there is cause enough for fear.

SECOND SOLDIER.

'Tis true,
I swear 'tis true; I saw him with these eyes.

ABINADAB.

But twisted o'er your shoulder as you ran.

DAVID.

What shall be done to him that shall destroy
This champion, and blot out our shame? For who
Is this uncircumcised Philistine that
Defies the armies of the living God?

THIRD SOLDIER.

The king hath sworn that he will make him rich
With great reward.

SECOND SOLDIER.

May I be poor forever

THIRD SOLDIER.

And make his father's house free in the land.

SECOND SOLDIER.

I'd sooner be a slave, and live, than meet
My death at his huge spear, tossed in the air
And twirled aloft on its keen point, like this.

(*Twirls his helmet on the point of his spear.*)

THIRD SOLDIER.

And more,—the king hath promised that the man
Who slayeth this blaspheming wretch, shall wed
His daughter.

SECOND SOLDIER.

She will never be my wife,
If that's her price.

DAVID.

Where is the glory fled
Of Israel! Spirit of Joshua,
Shall one base infidel defy God's host?
And where is Saul? Where Jonathan, whose arm
Smote twenty in one day, and put to flight
The whole Philistine host? I will go up
To meet this man!

ALL.

Ha! ha!

SECOND SOLDIER.

Who is this boaster?

ELIAB.

Why comest thou down hither? and with whom
Hast left those few sheep in the wilderness?
I know thy pride and naughtiness of heart,
For thou art come that thou might'st see the battle.

DAVID.

What have I done? Is this not cause enough?

ELIAB.

Haste, babbler, to thy flocks: leave war to men!
No more disgrace our house with thy vain words.

(*The Giant of Gath appears, preceded by an armor-bearer.*)

THIRD SOLDIER.

He comes! he comes!

(*All look amazed, then tremble and flee in great confusion, except David.*)

ARMOR-BEARER.

I, in the name of him
Whose shield I bear, defy you all this day.
Give me a man, that we may fight. Ha! ha!
They flee like sheep before the wolf, and none are left
To hear the challenge but that shepherd lad.
Fear not; the eagle does not stoop to mice.

DAVID.

I, in the name of Israel, accept,
And will to-morrow meet thy champion here.

ARMOR-BEARER.

Ha, ha! Goliath will be here; doubt not.
By Ashtaroth and Dagon, he will give
Thy flesh to beasts and birds.

(*Exeunt Goliath and armor-bearer.*)

(*Re-enter Eliab.*)

ELIAB.

O, has he gone?

DAVID.

Here are thy loaves! perchance they will sustain
Thy sinking soul. Now lead me to the king.

(*Exeunt.*)

*Scene III.*—INTERIOR OF SAUL'S TENT.—*Time, night.*
(*Enter Saul and Abner.*)

SAUL.

Now forty suns have wheeled round earth, since first
We came to meet our ancient enemy;
And forty days this mighty champion,
With taunts and curses, hath come up and dared
Us to decide the war in single fight.
And yet, in all the tents of Israel
Dwells not a man so prodigal of life,
So bold of heart, that he will venture all
In one great deed, and dying, win
Undying fame, or living, doubly live,
Crowned with the honor of his countrymen.
Not great rewards, nor duty's stern appeal,
Nor fame's sweet voice, can rouse my people's souls.
"For what," say they, "are fame and wealth to us
If we go down to death? For life is sweeter
Than honor, and the light of day than great
Rewards." Thus long have I delayed to see
If God would raise him up a champion
To vindicate his name. But none appears.
Day after day I've offered sacrifice
In vain. God is no more in Israel;
For Samuel withdraws, and with him takes
The Lord, and leaves me but his curse. Because
I stayed not sacrifice at Gilgal, when
The laggard priest's set time had passed, and all
My people fled, he prophesied the end
And ruin of my kingdom. When I wrought
His will on Amalek, and only spared
The harmless herds, an offering to the Lord,
He fell into a pious rage, and swore

Another should possess my crown and throne.
God is no God if reason he have not,
And mercy too. I care not for his aid.
And now, I learn, the angry seer hath gone
To Bethlehem, and chosen Jesse's son,
Anointing him as king. 'Tis well he hides
His traitorous head at Ramah. I am king
In Israel, and woe to him that dares
Rebel! I scorn these idle prophecies.
Abner, who is thy king? Who rules this host,
Whose countless tents along these hillsides gleam,
In blended ranks, dense as the unnumbered stars
That form the angels' roadway overhead?

ABNER. (*Bowing.*)

Thou art our king, O Saul.

SAUL.

Rule I, or God?

ABNER.

Who is this God? I never have beheld him.

SAUL.

Hath he not fought for us?

ABNER.

For, or against,
I know not which. But this I know, that he
Is ever found upon the side that hath
The strongest phalanx.

SAUL.

With him, or without
His aid, to-morrow morn I shall go forth
To fight Goliath. Not another day
Shall his vile insults sting mine ear.

ABNER.

Not thou,
O king. Let lesser man the hazard take,
Whilst thou, who only canst control, dost hold
The ranks prepared to rush upon the foe.

SAUL.

Was it for this ye chose me king? Shall I
Turn back while others dare death's strong embrace?
Did not the people say, "Give us a king
To go before us and to fight our battles?"
He who would lead must dare. E'en though he bear
A lambkin's heart, the lion's skin must hide it.
Be there a height so great it pierce the clouds,
Rough, steep, and dense with bristling foes from base
To death-crowned peak, yet will I rush to scale it.
And though before my feet there yawn a gulf
Broad as the sea, as black as hell, and deep,
I'll plunge therein, let heaven and earth cry hold,
If Israel bids me on. Thou knowest not
The soul that rules this breast, if thou conceiv'st
The son of Kish feels fear. No more forget
That I am king.

ABNER.

Thy pardon grant, O king.
But let thy servant one more word advise.
As I came through the camp I heard that one
Had offered to go out against this man.
I know not who; and yet, I heard so much,
I would advise to stay thy will one day,
And learn the truth.

SAUL.

If, on the morrow, none
Comes forth to claim this enterprise, 'tis mine.

(*Enter David accompanied by Jonathan.*)

JONATHAN.

Father, I found without this youth, who sought
Thy tent, and words with thee; with what design
He would not tell, but was so earnest that
I ventured, though the hour be late, to lead
Him in.

SAUL.

What is thy business, boy?

DAVID.

O king,
Let no man be dismayed because of this
Philistine; for thy servant will go up
To meet this champion.

SAUL.

Be not so fond
Of empty fame. Thou canst not fight this man,
Whose towering height and matchless strength are joined
To equal skill and valor. He's a man
Of war from youth, and thou—a simple lad.

(*Turns aside.*)

ABNER.

Waste not our time with thine impertinence.

DAVID.

Yet hear, O king. I kept my father's sheep;
And, lo, there came a ravenous bear and seized

A lamb from out the flock. All unprepared
For such a foe, I followed, caught, and smote
Him with my single arm, and slew him there.
Again, a hungry lion came, whose roar
Made all the hills with echoes dread resound,
And every lesser beast to hide with fear.
He sprang into my flock, and with his prey
Slow stalked away, as king of all the earth.
Him I pursued. I seized his shaggy mane
In one strong hand, and with the other rained
Such blows with oaken staff upon his head,
While all the air with hideous roars he rent,
That soon, his fierceness slain and overcome,
The king of beasts lay dead upon the plain.
And so shall this Philistine be, that dares
The armies of the living God. For he
Who saved me from the paws of these huge beasts,
Will rescue from the hands of this great foe.

SAUL.

In truth thou hast a sinewy frame, and heart
For bravest deeds. The Lord be with thee. Go!
Yet thou art ill prepared for such a fight.
Take thou this helmet, and my well-tried sword,
For it hath tasted blood of many a foe;
And this strong shield; it hath withstood the shock
Of hostile spear.

(*David essays to put on the armor.*)

DAVID.

I cannot go with these:
I have not tested them.

(*Throws them upon the ground, and takes his shepherd's staff and sling.*)

Seest thou these stones?
I chose them from the brook that flows beside
My father's door. These I can sling with aim
That stops the raven in her highest flight,
And with a force to lay a lion low.
This weapon I have used from infancy,
Taught, even then, to hit the target placed
On topmost bough, ere I could win my rude
Repast. God saveth not with sword and spear.
Now all the earth shall know there is a God
In Israel. [*Exit David.*

ABNER.

A worthy champion
Indeed!

SAUL.

Know'st thou whose son this stripling is?

ABNER.

O king, I cannot tell.

SAUL.

Go and inquire. [*Exit Abner.*
Son, leave me now, we have outstayed the night,—
Calm, starry night that hushes all the world,—
And I have need of sleep.— [*Exit Jonathan.*
Sweet, dreamless sleep
Is mine no more. 'Tis nature's recompense
To those who have no other good. The poor
Can lay their jaded limbs and careless brains
On night's sweet couch, and find oblivion;
But evil spirits drive it from my breast.
For when the glaring eye of day is shut,
And all its discords cease, then conscience wakes,
And stalks through all the chambers of the brain,

Knocks at the door of every sin, and cries
Awake, arouse! When stern ambition comes
Into the soul, he throws so wide the door
That every wrong comes crowding in his train,
And every gentle virtue takes its flight.
These hateful guests remain, and urge me on;
While fate, behind, with time's unyielding tread,
Impels me to my destiny. I must
Go forth to meet this man. My star tells true,—
My death-hour is not come; and in his fall
My throne is fixed forever. [*Lies down.*
Now, strong sleep
Possess me; pour new strength along my limbs;
In death's disguise, instill new life. [*Sleeps.*

(*Morning dawns.*) (*Cheers and shouts without.*) (*Wakes.*)

Whence come
These shouts? Has the Philistine come so soon?

(*Enter soldier.*)

SOLDIER.

They flee!

SAUL.

Who flee?

SOLDIER.

The foe, the hated foe!
Goliath's slain! [*Exit soldier.*

(*Saul goes to the front of the tent, throws back the curtain, and sees David standing over the body of Goliath. In the distance the Israelites are seen pursuing the enemy with cheers and shouts.*)

(*Jonathan rushes into the tent, followed by soldiers.*)

JONATHAN.

Joy, father! Israel
Is free.

SAUL.

What mean these words?

JONATHAN.

Goliath's slain.

SAUL.

By whom?

JONATHAN.

The young man whom thou saw'st.

SAUL.

But how?
Relate.

JONATHAN.

When I left thee, the sun climbed up
The east, and with him came the man of Gath
Arrayed in all the panoply of war,
And seemed a walking tower of glittering brass.
While all stood dumb, with boastings loud he told
His deeds of valor, and demanded one
To fight with him. And when none came, but all
Began to flee, he called us slaves and dogs,
And cursed us by his gods. Then, all at once,
Before him stood this youth. At sight of him
The giant's wrath waxed hot. With horrid oaths
He swore the youth should be a prey to beasts
And carrion birds. But he, still undismayed,
With confidence replied, "This day art thou
Delivered to my hand. Thee will I smite,
And from thee take thy head, that all may know
The battle is the Lord's." Then forward rushed,

And as he ran, drew forth a stone, and swung
Around his head a sling. Forth shot the slug,
With the twang of an iron bow, and smote
The giant in the forehead. All so brief,
We heard at once the sling's shrill cry, and crash
Of shield and spear, when down he fell, as falls
The hoary oak, with thunder to the ground.
The foe in terror fled, whilst we pursued,
And I am come to bear the glorious news.

SAUL.

Now is my kingdom sure! My star shines bright!
Speed on pursuit. Let not a soul be spared.
[*Exit soldiers.*
Where are my captains? Where is Abner now?
(*Cheers without.*)

JONATHAN.

He comes, and with him brings the shepherd lad.
(*Enter Abner and David bearing the sword of Goliath.*)

ABNER.

This lad, I know not how, hath slain the great
Philistine, and made way for victory.

SAUL.

Thou shalt tend sheep no more, but next the throne
Be numbered with our kingdom's strongest peers.

DAVID.

O king, I bring thee here the mighty sword
With which I took away the giant's head.
Take thou the trophy. Place it o'er our shrine,
An everlasting token, that the Lord
Hath wrought this thing in Israel.

SAUL.

Brave youth,
It shall be done. And when, in coming time,
Our children ask whence this huge brand, thy tale
Shall be related; how a shepherd boy,
With stone and sling, laid low the giant foe,
And made his country free.

DAVID.

Now let me go.
My father sighs for my return.

SAUL.

Whose son
Art thou?

DAVID.

I am thy servant's youngest son,
Jesse, of Bethlehem.

SAUL.

What! art thou he
Whom Samuel hath prophesied shall yet
Possess my throne?

DAVID.

Thou art the anointed king,
And I, thy poorest subject, do obey.

SAUL.

Now are the prophet's words belied. For, mark;
The very man he chose to work my end
Hath slain my greatest foe, and grounded deep
The pillars of my throne. The God he serves
Hath overshot his mark; or, if he rules,
'Tis o'er the immortal ones, and not on earth.
I thank thee, prophet, for thy warning words;
Now is my course made clear. But first, this youth—

ABNER. (*Aside to the king.*)
Set him in the post of danger. Let him fall
By hostile hand. So clip the lion's strength
Ere he be grown.

SAUL. (*To David.*)
Thou shalt be captain o'er
A thousand. Stay until my farthest foe
Be slain; then shalt thou go unto thy sire
With honor. Abner, haste we in pursuit.
Sheathe not the sword till every house in Gath
Shall mourn a man-child slain, and Askelon
Lament her princes that shall come no more.
Thus shall my kingdom stretch from shore to shore.

[*Exeunt Saul and Abner.*

JONATHAN.
Thee can I love. In all my father's court,
There lives not one that does not live for self
Alone. Self is the mote set in the eye,
That darkens all the world. Self makes each drink
His cup alone in dark suspicion, drowns
The voice of justice, stifles love and peace,
Deluding men of noblest mold to deeds
Of baseness. Human souls were made for love.
Oft, sick at heart with life's unvaried ills,
I've fled unto myself for that I sought,
And pictured forth a being blest with all
Those God-like attributes we love, and vowed
Would Heaven grant me such a one, to him
I'd cleave till death alone should part. This day
Hath seen my dream made fact. Thou art the man.
To thee I vow eternal friendship true.

DAVID.

Now am I blest indeed! Not when I set
My foot upon the giant's neck while shouts
Rang in my ear, did such a glow suffuse
My frame as now. O prince, if I find grace
With thee, I swear by Him who knows not change,
That David is thy friend.

JONATHAN. (*Giving David his sword and bow.*)
Be these the signs
That Jonathan hath made this covenant
With David. Let the coming ages be
Our witness unto time's remotest day. [*Exeunt.*

# ACT II.

*Scene I.*—GIBEAH.—*Before the palace of the king.*

(*Enter Saul, Abner, David, Jonathan, officers and soldiers.*)

SAUL.

Now are the ruddy waves of war rolled back
From Israel's coasts, that on their foaming crests
Yet bear aloft and scatter wide the wrecks
Of hostile pride. My utmost wish is wrought
On that fell race, God's scourge o'er Israel.
To David, first, my thanks are due, who smote
The mighty bulwark; then to you who rushed
Into the breach he made; while fear, more swift
Than conquering arms, the fated foe pursued.
With joy I see my home. My people now,
Beneath God's smile, can reap the fruits of field
And flock, unpillaged and unawed;
Our kingdom stands secure on every hand.

ABNER.

To thee, O king, is all the honor due
Of this great victory. The foe will e'er
Respect thy heavy hand, and Israel
Thy laws. Long live our valiant king!

DAVID.

He, who to Abraham pledged this fair land,
And drove its people out before the sword
Of Joshua, gave us this victory.

ABNER.

And who art thou, son of an unknown sire,
A base, Judean shepherd, that dost dare
Detract aught from the honor of our king?

JONATHAN.

O valiant Abner! thou hast pursued so hot
A fleeing foe, that thou dost soon forget
Who put the foe to flight, and us to shame,
And smote the champion that forty days
Defied us all.

SAUL.

Lay by your vain disputes;
This is a day for joy. O'er war's dark rents
Hang wreaths, and smoothe the wrinkled brow of care
In feasts and mirth. E'en now there meets mine ear
The voice of chanting maidens, come with song
And dance, to welcome us to homes of peace.

(*Chanting heard faintly within the palace, gradually drawing nearer.*)

DAVID.

As Miriam and Moses sang their praise
To God, that brought them out of Egypt's land,
So Israel's daughters come, with joy to chant
Deliverance from Philistia's foul hand.

(*Enter from the palace chorus of Hebrew women, led by Rachel and Sarah, daughters of Saul.*)

CHORUS.

Great is the Lord, and mighty is his arm,
That giveth Israel the victory.
He hath turned back the armies of our foes,
And slain the strength that made us sore afraid.

In pride they came, with banners flaunting wide,
Like forest leaves when wanton spring is green;
In death they lie, like autumn's withered leaves
That bleach upon a thousand hills and plains.
With vaunting threats they swore that Israel
Should be destroyed, his sons find sudden death;
His daughters fair should weep, in bondage led
To heathen homes, and terrors worse than death;
And Hebrew matrons, proud in many sons,
Should, childless, toil in hopeless servitude.
But now their words are as the idle wind,
And they themselves sink back to mother earth.
Philistia's daughters mourn, whilst we rejoice:
Her mothers sit in silent, childless homes.
Then praises sing to God, that rules on earth,
And to his chosen sons that give us joy.
To valiant Saul, our first anointed king,
As great in glorious deeds as in his form;
To Judah's shepherd, next, who with a sling,
Laid low the mighty foe, and oped the door
Through which together pressed soul-slaying fear
And heaven-born victory. To Jonathan
We sing, the hope of Israel, the joy
Of every maiden's heart, and yet foremost
In danger's fields where warlike works are wrought.
And following fast, our country's strongest stay,
Great Abner rages like a lion roused,
Or battle steed that snuffs the smoke afar.
To these, and all our valiant sires and sons,
We sing and dance, with hearts replete with joy.

(*They dance: then part into two divisions and chant responsively.*)

CHORUS.

How beauteous are the feet of those who bring
Glad tidings of sweet peace to troubled souls.

SEMI-CHORUS.

The heavy spear, and sharp, unfeeling sword
Have pierced the hearts of those who wished us ill.

CHORUS.

The sword is sheathed in joyful Israel:
The bow unstrung; the arrow flies no more.

SEMI-CHORUS.

Yet is stern war, of gentle peace the sire;
He only can her infant slumbers guard.

CHORUS.

But now she comes to us, with laughing eyes,
We welcome her, and reck not of her birth.

SEMI-CHORUS.

But liberty, her sister, is as fair,
And with her sire oft goes to battle forth.

CHORUS.

Her, too, we greet with joyful hearts, and pray
She may forever dwell with smiling peace.

SEMI-CHORUS.

Then sing their praise, who from war's cruel arms
Have brought his daughters fair with us to dwell.

CHORUS.

Great is the shield of Saul; before his spear
Dark terror runs, and after, victory.

SEMI-CHORUS.

Strong is the arm of David; high his soul,
Who met and slew the mightiest man of war.

CHORUS.

As towers Saul's form above all other men,
So is his name; Saul hath his thousands slain.

SEMI-CHORUS.

As fell the champion by his single arm,
So David hath his tens of thousands slain.

CHORUS.

(*Gradually withdrawing as they entered.*)

Then welcome peace, and welcome liberty,
And welcome home our brave deliverers,—

ENTIRE CHORUS.

For kingly Saul hath slain his thousand foes;
But tens of thousands hath great David slain.

(*Exit chorus, repeating the last refrain.*)

SAUL. (*Aside to Abner.*)

To David tens of thousands are ascribed;
To me but thousands! What can he have more,
But all my kingdom?

ABNER.

Set a snare for him.
Let not the rank weed grow beside thy house,
But plant it where the steeds of war will tread
It down, and bury 'neath the sharp plowshare
Of death.

SAUL. (*To David.*)

Did'st thou behold my eldest daughter,
Who led the dance?

DAVID.

Yea, I saw one, O king,
Who looked disdain upon the shepherd youth;—
And one more kind, more fair, methinks,—

SAUL.

What, her!
My youngest and my dearest! Nay, not so:
'Tis meet the elder should be wedded first;
Her shalt thou have to wife. But be thou brave,
And fight for me the battles of the Lord.

DAVID.

O king, thou honorest me o'er much. For who
Am I, or what my father's family
In Israel, that I should be thy son?

SAUL.

By boldest hearts are noblest women won.
Sheathe not thy sword; where danger calls be first;
Rest not. To still more daring deeds go forth.
Come, worthy friends, come, let us go within,
And rest awhile from well-earned victory.

(*All but David enter the palace.*)

DAVID.

O father! look upon thy suffering son,
In this brief space transformed, and clad in all
The harsh habiliments of dreaded war;
Then weep to see thy boding words made true.
I am a man, alas! too soon; and all
Man's vast inheritance of woes is mine.
Why did I leave my peaceful home, and go
Where sounds of war inflame the youthful blood!
And yet, a heavenly voice did call me thence,

And rouse my soul to ransom Israel.
The sword is seized, and burns into my hand!
Come war, thou art my peace; and fiercest foes,
My friends! Farewell, farewell to Bethlehem's hills,
And humble homes of innocence and joy!
Farewell, my gentle flocks, that wait my call
Which ye shall hear no more; ye groves and glades,
That knew my step which comes not yet again.
Farewell, ye rocks and caves, that to my reed
Gave sweetest echoes back; ye solemn woods,
Whose diapason grand for me did swell,
And wrap in fierce delight, when winds were high,
And thunders rolled their terrible refrain.
Farewell, myself! that wast—and art no more;
And welcome this new man, of this fierce sire
Begot.
(*Addressing his sword.*)
I trust thou wilt not slay thy son.
The hand that wrought this change still leads me on,
And I pursue, whether to do or bear. [*Exit.*

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*Scene II.*—GIBEAH.—*Interior of the Palace.*

(*Enter Rachel and Sarah.*)

RACHEL.

Dear Sarah, knowest thou the youth who stood
Beside our father, and received so much
Of praise, methinks as ill befits his years
And unknown parentage?

SARAH.

I only know
That he is young and fair, and looks a prince.

RACHEL.

Didst note how soon his new-fledged honors make
His look and step too high for low-born youth?

SARAH.

His eye is bright, indeed, with fire of truth;
And his free foot hath never learned to bend
With feigned humility.

RACHEL.

Saul eyes askance
This mountain oak, that thrives too near
The throne, and would transplant to harsher clime,
Lest he should wither in its growing shade.

SARAH.

Hath not our royal father promised thee
A bride to him, returning from new wars
And victories?

RACHEL.

But he may not return—

SARAH.

Kind Heaven grant he may!

RACHEL.

Not if I am
To be the guerdon of his bravery.

SARAH.

And is he not a husband worthy maid
Of highest birth?

RACHEL.

Thou knowest not his name
Nor lineage! Shame, daughter of King Saul
Should so forget her merit!

SARAH.

I care not what
His name, his fortune, or his family.
Man's real worth to woman lies in man
Alone. A heart that's pure and true, a mind
Undrugged with selfishness, and action just,
That looks heaven in the face—that is a man.

RACHEL.

What! dost thy heart incline to this fair stranger?

SARAH.

He is not quite unknown; for Jonathan,
Our brother, hath told how with staff and scrip
To camp he came, of Judah's tribe, to see
His brethren there; how, when all hearts had quailed
For forty days before the man of Gath,
This youth, inspired of God, went forth, smote him,
And gained for us the liberty and peace
We sing. Our brother saith he is a man
To be his choice among a thousand; one
With heart unfurrowed yet by passions fierce,
Where seeds of love, dropped in the virgin soil,
Will freely grow, and noblest fruitage bear.
A covenant of friendship they have made,
Bright harbinger of purest joys to both.
Would such a friend were mine!

RACHEL.

Too well I see
Thou hast committed woman's gravest fault—
Let go thy heart ere it was sought of thee;
And to a shepherd! I could blush for thee,
My sister.

SARAH.

Spare thy blushes for thyself.
Is woman's soul less free than man's, that she
Its native flower must cover from the sun,
And hide in secret cells to fade and die,
Or be untimely plucked by vagrant hands?
My brother owns his love for this true man,
And why not I?

RACHEL.

Confess it, then, to me,
But not in that proud tone.

SARAH.

Of woman's life
The glory and completeness is her love;
And doubly crowned is she that loves aright.
She does not spread her perfumes to the breeze,
But hoards to lavish all on her heart's lord.

RACHEL.

If Saul learn this he will be sore displeased.

SARAH.

Though he hath double right as sire and king
To mine obedience, my heart's mine own.

RACHEL.

I like not these high words. They do not fit
Thy gentle sex. I leave thee now, and hope
Thy heart may learn to bend before it break.

SARAH.

Farewell, then—but know this: woman is man.
The law that rules his soul guides hers; except

As she came later from the hand of God,
She hath remembrance better of his truth
And purity. [*Exit Rachel.*

O Thou that didst protect
Our fathers, Abraham and Jacob, from
Their foes, and didst deliver Joseph safe
From all the snares of envy, lust, and hate,
And set him where his native excellence
Might shine a guiding light to all his race,
Thus watch, I pray, o'er David, and stretch out
Thine arm in his defense.

(*Enter David unperceived.*)

Let hostile spear
Be broken by his hand. Turn back the sword;
Avert the flying arrow, and destroy
In self-set snare those who breathe out their threats
Against the blameless son of Jesse.

DAVID.

Princess,
O, can it be, that thou dost pray for me,
Who am not worthy of thy slightest thought?

SARAH.

Hast heard my words? For whom more worthy can
I pray? My prayer is answered ere expressed;
Thou art returned so soon!

DAVID.

I have not yet
Set forth.

SARAH.

O, then, wilt thou remain with us?
No more take in thy hand thy precious life.

Not all the heathen lives thou hast destroyed,
Or may'st destroy, can equal thine. The soul
Once spilled into the infinite sands, can ne'er
Be gathered up; and this rare spirit, once
Freed from this fleshly ark that floats betwixt
The sea and sky of two eternities,
Returns again no more. O, go not hence,
Thou lion of fair Judah's hills! Learn war
No more.

DAVID.

The king commands; I must obey.
Besides, he would incite my youthful hopes
With promise of a royal marriage, which
I do not seek. 'Tis better far to wed
In one's own rank.

SARAH.

If love do truly join,
All ranks are naught.

DAVID.

Thy sister, Rachel, loves
Me not. I have discerned her haughty glance
Cast on the humble shepherd.

SARAH.

She sees not
The king within thee.

DAVID.

Gladly would I flee
This inauspicious union, and escape
This life of warfare, envy, and deceit.

SARAH.

Yet there is one who better knows thy worth.

DAVID.

What sweeter joy than to be truly known!
And known by one that is both fair and good.
Fair as the lilies of the vale is she;
Proud as the cedars upon Lebanon;
And I am blest to kiss her garment's hem.

SARAH.

Love hath its own; for all her heart is thine.

DAVID.

Now am I raised to heaven, and cast down
To hell; to catch a glimpse of Paradise,
And be eternally shut out!

SARAH.

Brave youth,
Do not despair. My father's restless mind
May change, and Sarah yet will be thine own.

DAVID.

No! *Princess* thou art rightly named, and art
Too high a star for shepherd lad to pluck;
But, guided by its fixed and lambent light,
I now can go to whate'er fate God's hand
Prepares, and know I cannot die unblest,
Since Sarah's love and Jonathan's are mine.

SARAH.

The distant star will yet descend to thee,
And in thy dwelling glow, constant and bright,
Upon thy hearth.

DAVID.

Remote or near, thou art
The ruler of my heart. Could I but call
Thee mine !—

*(Enter King Saul, followed by Abner, officers, and attendants. From another direction Rachel and her maidens.)*

SAUL.

What, shepherd, art thou here? Dost dare
Address the daughter of the king? Away!
The battle calls for thee.

SARAH.

O, father, spare
Thy wrath, or let it fall on me alone,
Who stayed this noble youth, and would still save
Him from the fates of war. Canst thou so soon
Forget the debt which thou and all our race
Do owe to him for our great victory,
So lately sung?

SAUL.

And did ye not ascribe
To David tens of thousands, and to me
But thousands? Does my daughter intercede
For my base rival, and forget her own
High birth?

RACHEL.

More! Ask her if she do not love
The shepherd.

SAUL.

What!

SARAH.

Yea, I acknowledge it!
Here, on the pinnacle of womanhood,

I stand, and claim the woman's crown. I love
One true, brave man, and am by him beloved.

SAUL.

Then he shall die!

(*Seizing his javelin, rushes upon David.*)

SARAH. (*Springing between them.*)

And I with him!

ABNER.

Hold, Saul!
Let not thy hand be on him, but another's.

DAVID.

No hour so fit as this. And if it be
Thy will and God's, I do not fear to die.
I leave my country free, and shall not fall
Unmourned.

ABNER. (*Aside to the king.*

By paths more indirect, O king,
Wilt thou more surely come unto thine end.
This time make sure the snare already spread.
Thou need'st but name the dowry of his bride;
Her boasted love shall lead him straight to death.

SAUL.

Thy words seem wise, and shall be tried at once.

(*To David.*)

Young man, wilt thou my youngest daughter wed?

DAVID.

Why mock me thus? Besides, thou know'st I'm poor,
And Jesse's family of light esteem.

SAUL.

I seek no other dowry than the spoils
Of fifty of my foes, slain by thy hand.

ABNER. (*Aside.*)

Double the tale; make double sure thine aim.

DAVID.

Now does my darkness break! Wilt swear, O king?

SAUL.

As God doth live, in presence of all these,
I swear, that if before the sun shall twice
Complete his course round earth, thou bring me here
A hundred shields and helmets, taken all
From slain Philistines, Sarah shall be thine.

RACHEL.

Who ever set for love a task like this!

ABNER.

'Tis easily performed by one who works
Such wonders.

SARAH. (*To David.*)

O, risk not thy life for me!
Live, though it be to wed another bride.
Instead, let me in darkness die, condemned
To see thy face no more.

DAVID.

I never lived
Till now. And now, inspired by this new hope,
I feel I cannot die. O, king, thy word
Now given I eagerly accept, and haste
To win the fairest pearl of all the earth.

[*Exit.*

SAUL.

Will no one rid me of mine enemy?
Shall I, the king of Israel, be thus
Defied upon my throne! *Am* I the king!
Yea, I am chief in misery, and first
In woe as power; exalted but to fall
To deeper depths, and ruin without hope;
Cast off by God; deserted and betrayed
By his false prophet; bearded by this youth,
Anointed and foretold to seize my throne;
My people's heart beguiled; and topmost weight
Of woe that breaks my heart, my daughter turned
Against her father, and my son allied
Unto my foes! Ye villains, traitors all!
Combine your hellish arts—Saul will be king!
Pile mountain upon mountain high to crush,
And I will rise and overturn them all!

ABNER.

We are thy friends, while not a foe dares raise
His hand against thy power.

SAUL.

Silence! Thou wretch!
Dost thou, too, wag thy tongue against thy king?
O for a sword to rid me of my foes!
Then would I slay ye all, and cast myself
Upon the indistinguishable mass,
Amid the blazing fragments of my throne!
O! had I now the strength of mighty Samson,
I would the pillars seize of this huge world,
And bring its vast, stupendous ruins down
On all our race, and end at once our woes!

FIRST ATTENDANT.

O, great and sovereign lord, it is not thou
That utterest these words. The king can speak
No ill; but evil spirits do possess
Thy tongue, and overrule thy heart. Let us
Now send, I pray, for one in music skilled,
That by the enchantment of harmonious sounds
Thy evil spirit may be exorcised,
And thy true mind restored.

SAUL.

Dost know of one
Who thus can cure the soul?

FIRST ATTENDANT.

Most noble lord,
The son of Jesse, David, hath great skill
Upon the harp; and if he play before the king
Thine evil spirit will depart.

SAUL.

Recall him.

ABNER.

O, king, ere this he's far upon his way.

SAUL.

Thou speak'st again! Learn when to speak, and when
To hold thy peace, or never hope for place.
Send swiftest messengers, and fetch the man
At once, or never see my face again. (*Exit Abner.*)
Dark is that soul from whence the lamp divine
Has been removed, or quenched for want of fire
Drawn down from the eternal source of light.

There evil lusts do grow and propagate;
Blind envy broods; fierce hates and rancors rage;
Foul passions burrow in the black abyss;
While over all sleepless remorse doth hold
Her scorpion scourge, and lash to tenfold fury.

(*Enter Abner and David.*)

ABNER.

Here is the famed musician. Would'st thou ease
Thy mind's distemper, thou should'st play on him.

(*David takes a harp, and touches the strings.*)

SAUL.

Young man, canst thou attune a heart unstrung,
Whose sweetest chords are snapped, and noblest keys
Untouched? Which having lost the primal note
Of heaven, is now no more in unison
With nature or with man, its jangled tones
Discordant with the world and with itself?

DAVID.

He who hath formed this wondrous instrument,
And set its thousand strings to heaven's key,
Alone can re-attune. But nature's notes
All chime to this same key, and these, when touched,
Do fill the soul with native harmonies
It recognizes as its own.

SAUL.

Let them
Be tones of heaven or hell, so they do drown
The voices in my breast, and give me rest!

(*David plays upon the harp.*)

Sweet music hath a magic power to soothe:
The voices cease—they sink away—they die.

(*Music.*) (*Saul Sleeps.*)

ABNER.

The mightiest monarch yields to gentle sleep;
Stripped of his cares, the king is but a man.

RACHEL.

His troubled bosom heaves in rhythm slow,
Like billows of the never-resting sea.

SARAH.

O! is the evil spirit fled his breast?

SAUL. (*Suddenly awaking and starting up.*)

Demons of hell, depart! Help! furies! death!

(*Seizes his javelin and hurls it at David, who avoids it and escapes, leaving it sticking in the wall.*)

(*Sarah falls fainting upon the divan.*)

Fall, fall, ye heavens, and hide me from these fiends!
Fly! fly! Woe! woe! [*Exeunt all except Sarah.*

SARAH. (*Recovering.*)

Am I alone? O God
Is this a dream? O, thou all-seeing One,
Canst thou behold the woes that gather round
This fated house, and not be moved to pity?
Avert, I pray, its fast-descending doom.
Grant Saul a better mind; and David's soul
Raise to the height of his great sufferings.

(*Enter Jonathan.*)

Joy! There's one heart to which I yet can fly,
And find true sympathy.

JONATHAN.

Sweet sister, yea,
Close to this breast, here is thy rest. But whence
Comes thy distress? And why do all I meet
Eye me with looks downcast and full of fear?

SARAH.

O! ask me not to tell this day's sad scenes.
An evil spirit rules our father's heart.
As David played before the king, to calm
His troubled soul, roused by the fiends, he seized
A javelin, and hurled with deadly aim
At the sweet singer; but a stronger turned
Aside the shaft, and he escaped.

JONATHAN.

Alas!
The evil days draw nigh, foretold of God.

SARAH.

Most direful stroke, that falls on those we love!

JONATHAN. (*Leading her to a divan.*)

I know thy noble soul, and how it turns,
Like unto like, to him with whom I, too,
Am bound in friendship true. We three are one;
And even as mine own, will I secure
His good and thine. Summon thy soul to meet
These stern and trying times. Preserve thy faith
In God and man, and all will yet be well.
Whate'er betide, the heart of Jonathan
Will ever answer to thy slightest call.

[*Exit.*

*(Enter Abner, unperceived by Sarah.)*

SARAH.

In this dark hour I cling to thy strong hand
And brave, unselfish heart.

ABNER.

These I have come
To offer thee.

SARAH.

Be not so free with what
Thou never didst possess! Where is my brother?

ABNER.

I know not, princess; but I take thy word.
Once more and last, I proffer thee my hand,
And refuge safe from this fast rising flood
Of ills.

SARAH.

Dost thou not understand I love
The son of Jesse, am his promised bride?

ABNER.

Dost thou not see thy father seeks his death,
And makes thy love his snare? Should he escape
And thou be joined to him, thou wouldst but share
And make more sure his miserable fate.
Be mine, and flee all this; and I will stand
Between thy father and thy friend, that he
May live.

SARAH.

Thou speak'st in vain. My heart is gone
From me, and never can come back. Thou dost not wish
The faded nest from which the bird is flown.

ABNER.

But woman's love doth come and go again,
Like mountain streams. In spring they overflow
Their narrow banks, but when the traveler comes
Again to slake his thirst, they mock him with
The drops that trickle o'er their stony beds.

SARAH.

Thou dost belie my sex with truths half told.
Like mountain streams, is woman's heart supplied
From sources nearer heaven. It is the course
Of love divine to man, whose currents rich
He passes by, unworthy, or receives
Thankless and vain.

ABNER.

Dost thou refuse my love?

SARAH.

It never has been given.

ABNER.

Dost count so light
My earnest words? Thou shalt repent thy slights.

SARAH.

Thou need'st a heart, O valiant man, to teach
Thee how to woo.

ABNER.

But I know how to win!
Thy sire will not, dare not, deny my suit.

SARAH.

Go, go, base man, and learn that woman's heart
Was ne'er besieged and won by force. Away!

ABNER.

These words insure thy doom. [*Exit.*

SARAH.

O! wretched me!
To whom sweet love, God's richest gift, proves woe,
And snares of death to him it seeks to bless.

(*Sinks in despair upon the divan.*)

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*Scene III.*—GIBEAH.—*A court in the city near the king's palace.*

(*Enter Saul, Abner, Jonathan, officers, and soldiers.*)

SAUL.

I charge ye all that David must be slain.
Let me not see his face again.

ABNER.

O king,
It shall be done. If he achieve thy task,
Yet he shall not possess its pledged reward.

JONATHAN.

Wherefore shall he be slain? What hath he done?

SAUL.

Thou offspring of a woman most perverse,
Do not I know that thou hast chosen the son
Of Jesse to thine own disgrace and hers
Who bore thee? For as long as David lives
Thou shalt not be established nor thy throne.

JONATHAN.

Forbear! I can no more! Thou shalt repent
Thy words against my mother. I forgive
Thy speech to me, for I know how thy wrath
Flames forth at slightest touch of opposition.
Such is the malady of power uncurbed.
I only seek to draw thy feet from sin;
Let not the king do any wrong to David,
For he hath done no ill to thee, and all
His works have been to thee but good.
For he hath put his life into his hands,
Slain the Philistine, and the Lord hath wrought
A great salvation for all Israel.
Thou sawest it and did'st rejoice. Wherefore
Then wilt thou sin against the innocent,
To take the life of David without cause?

SAUL.

O Jonathan, thy words are good and true.
Thou'rt worthier than I to be called king
And sit upon the throne. I will obey
Thy counsels. As God doth live, I swear
That David shall not die.

ABNER.

Shall he then live
To wed thy daughter and usurp thy throne?

(*Enter David, followed by servants bearing shields and helmets, who pass in a long line before the king.*)

JONATHAN.

Lo! David, with the trophies of our foes,
The hard-won dowry of his bride.

SAUL.

Dost live!
What bring'st thou here?

DAVID.

The purchase of a queen.
Thy price, O king.

ABNER.

But fifty, boy.

DAVID.

Count them.

SAUL.

A hundred! Base-born, take thy promised bride.

ABNER.

What! Saul, not so!

SAUL.

The king's word rules the king.

JONATHAN.

And still they come! Two hundred! Sure the Lord
Is with him, and doth bless whate'er his hand
Attempts. [*Exit David*

SAUL.

Hath God become my foe? Did not
The prophet Samuel anoint this youth,
And prophesy that he would gain my throne?
Yet, though a thousand Gods combine with them
To work my ruin, I defy them all.
The morning shall not dawn before we know
Who rules this land. Come, Abner, soldiers, all
Who love or fear your king; obey my will,

And by the mighty powers of heaven and hell,
I swear to end this fateful fear forever.

[*Exeunt omnes.*

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*Scene IV.*—GIBEAH.—*Interior of David's dwelling. Night.*

(*David and Sarah.*)

DAVID.

Now are my toils and dangers all repaid,
To know that thou art mine for one short hour.
Though fear and fate attend our wedding feast,
And mirthful friends come not, we yet are blest.

SARAH.

David—*Dear* is thy name, and having thee,
The kingdoms of the earth are naught to me.
Though bought with death, life will I prove to thee.

DAVID.

My *Princess*, let me call thee mine once more,
Whilst thou art near. For in the future days
Our only joy may be the memory
Of this bright hour, and what we now possess.

SARAH.

Not all the ills of life or death itself,
Can make me e'er forget that I am thine.—
But what's that sound without? (*Goes to the door.*)

(*Enter Jonathan.*)

O, brother dear!

DAVID.

And brother mine: though that can nothing add
To what thou art—true friend.

JONATHAN.

Silence, and hear!
If thou save not thy life to-night, the morn
Will see thee slain; for now the king doth send
For thee; O flee while there is time—away!
[*Exit*

DAVID.

Here will I meet my foes, and fall near thee.
Then will my country be at peace.

SARAH.

'Tis not
The will of God. The prophecies that hang
O'er thee are not fulfilled. 'Tis thine to flee
And suffer now, as once to fight and win.
All things, when God directs, alike do tend
To the appointed end.

DAVID.

Thou hast prevailed.
But thou—

SARAH.

I go with thee. Are we not one?

DAVID.

Impossible. The dangers of the field
Thou canst not meet.

SARAH.

Those of the court are greater.

DAVID.

Not so. Here, thou art safe; there, both are lost.

SARAH.

O! let me go with thee. The hand of God
Will guide us. Where thou goest I will go,
And where thou diest I will die, and there
Will I be buried; nor even death part thee
And me.

(*Loud knocking at the door, and shouts without.*)

Too late! Save now thyself; leave me!
Go, go! and I will stay to aid thy flight.

DAVID.

How fly? My enemies are at the door.

(*Louder knocks and shouts.*)

SARAH.

Attend my words; the window is thy way.
This cord will let thee down; then fly for life.

DAVID.

Is there no way but this?
Come, trusty blade,

(*Putting on his sword.*)

The gift of Jonathan, take thou the place
Of wife! Cling to my side by day and night,—
O, my dear star, so soon to set and leave
Me wand'ring in a wilderness of foes!

SARAH.

One last embrace—one pang—and thou art gone!

(*Knocking increases. She lets David down from the window, then hastily places an image upon the divan and covers it to represent a man. Shouts without. The door is thrown open.*)

(*Enter messengers of the king.*)

MESSENGER.

The king demands where is thy husband?

SARAH.

There
He lies; behold, he is not well.

MESSENGER.

The king
Hath sent for him. But we will haste to bear
Report of this. [*Exeunt messengers.*

SARAH.

O Thou that canst not lie,
Forgive this fraud; for weak humanity
Not always doth rely on strength divine.
O! speed the steps of him who flees, and balk
His fierce pursuers. Yea, though every step
But sunders far whom thou hast just made one.
O, strengthen us for what remains, and let
Us ne'er forget, not all the ills of life,
Nor death, can equal loss of faith in thee,
And in each other.

(*Enter Saul, Abner, and soldiers.*)

SAUL.

Where is David?

SARAH.

Lo,
Thou seest. (*Points to the divan.*)

SAUL.

Soldiers, seize him, and bind fast
His feet, that he may not this time escape.

(*The soldiers go to the divan and tear off the coverings.*)

What! Gone! Is he not here? Is Israel's king
Deceived by his own daughter? Why hast thou
Done this, and sent away mine enemy?

SARAH.

Thine enemy? Dear enemy! O, may
He swift escape!

SAUL.

A father's curse be on thee!

SARAH.

A husband's blessing will outbalance it.

SAUL.

Furies and fiends of hell! this is your work!
Am I thus ever to be mocked, betrayed,
And made the sport of adverse fates? King Saul
Will yet prevail. By all the powers within,
By this strong arm and all my kingly might,
Destruction swift shall overtake the wretch.
Up, guards, pursue! My dearest friend is he
That brings mine enemy or his head. [*Exeunt guards.*
On thee,
False daughter, first, that durst defeat thy sire,
And mock him with thy words, shall fall thy fate.
Thy valiant spouse hath fled: here is a man
Far worthier than he, whose thou shalt be.

SARAH.

Never, alive!

SAUL.

Thou hearest my commands;
Obey, and learn to curb thy wanton tongue.
Now, Abner, take thy wife, and—
(*Abner advances.*)

SARAH.

Touch me not,
Thou crafty villain! (*Springs into the window.*)
Hence escaped my lord;
Advance one step, and I will follow him.
This door that gave him life and liberty,
Shall give me liberty and death!

ABNER.

One word,—

SAUL.

Then seize her, ere too late.

A SOLDIER.

The woman's mad!

(*All advance with uplifted hands to seize her.*)

SARAH.

A step,—a word,—a breath,—and all is o'er!

SAUL.

My child, I yield. O, spare thyself,—and me!
My dearest daughter, thou hast conquered Saul.

# ACT III.

*Scene I.*—A CAVE IN THE WILDERNESS OF ENGEDI.

(*Enter David.*)

DAVID.

Is this the end of all God's promises?
Was it for this was quickened in my heart
The seed divine, that swelled my youthful soul?
For this was Samuel sent to consecrate
My head, and speak those wondrous words that seemed
To show divine intent? Was it for this
I left my father's house and heard the voice
Of God bid me deliver Israel?
And this is all! A moment of applause,
An hour's triumph, one brief day of joy,—
And now this cave. High, heaven-inspired hope
Was mine. My people's confidence and trust,
The friendship of the truest man, and love
Of noblest woman of this world were mine—
And are no more; so soon have I passed through
The varied round of life; from innocence
And peace to war and woe; from friendship's light
And love's delight, to darkness and despair:—
And only death remains!——Unhappy he
To whom a soul is given that soars too high
For his rude lot, and beats its wings in vain
Against the bars of circumstance! Would I
Had never heard the prophet's words or call
Of inborn aspiration! Then would peace

Be mine. O father, gladly would I heed
Thy prayer, and hasten to thine arms!

(*Enter Jesse, Elizabeth, and David's brethren.*)

JESSE.

My son,
My son! Thank God, I have thee yet alive!
Thou hast not come to me;—but I seek thee.

DAVID.

My father, do I hear thy voice once more?
Reproach me not. My country called: the king
Commanded me to distant fields: but yet,
My heart returned to thee.—My mother, too!
I dared not hope to see thy face again.

ELIZABETH.

Art David? *Dear* my youngest child is named,
Our wandering lamb for whom we weeping seek.
But thou art grown so great, dost look so fierce
In that strange dress, I cannot call thee mine.
*My* child is gone—I know not where. Come, let
Us haste in search of him!

DAVID.

Have war and love
Wrought such a change as this? I cast away
The man of war, and am again thy son!

(*Throws down his shield, helmet, and sword,*)

ELIZABETH. (*Passing her hand over his face.*)

These are the same soft locks, the same smooth brow
And ruddy cheek. Thy dark eye is as bright,
And yet, methinks, it hath a sterner look,
And in thy firm set lips a curve that tells

Of dangers met, determination strong,
And soul resolved to face a world in arms.
Thou art my son, yet not he whom I seek.

JESSE.

The child that went from us cannot return ;
But that arm which I prayed I ne'er might see
In war's dread garb is now our shield and strength.
To thee we flee for refuge from our ills,
And anger of our king.

ELIAB.

To thee we come,
And place ourselves beneath thy wise command.
We know thy bravery on Elah's field,
Thy modest works that made our words our shame.
Be now our chief, and we will follow thee
Till Jesse's house be cut off from the earth,
Or God make known his purposes in thee.

DAVID.

Welcome, my brethren all! 'Tis well at times
To be afflicted, that our hearts may thus
Be stripped of their disguises and brought near,
Though driven by the lash. All welcome, now!
First, let us seek a safe retreat for these,
Our aged parents, from this threatening storm.
Abinadab, lead them to Moab's king,
Until I know what God will do for me.

JESSE.

He surely hath great things in store for thee,
My duteous son; there's none like thee in all
The tents of Israel. My dear, dear son,
Farewell!

ELIZABETH.

O! blessed for thy sake am I
That bore thee. For, though I have lost my child,
I yet have given to country and to God,
A man. [*Exeunt Jesse and Elizabeth.*

DAVID.

Dear ones, farewell! Thus are cast down
And shattered all your hopes of calm old age
Amidst the stalwart pillars of your house,
Which ye have reared for your last days' support.
Torn from your home, with trembling steps ye go
To strangers' care, whilst we, driven from our hills
And native air, do hide in this dark cave,
Like outcasts from the face of God and man.
Is there a God on earth that wills all this,
And shuts us in this narrow breach of time
By walls more thick and black than these huge rocks?
My brethren, are we men? Then let us bear
These present ills with manly hearts, and wait
The hour when these dark doors shall part, and lead
Us to the future's broader fields. Yet here
No rest is ours; for even now King Saul
Doth seek for us with threat'nings of swift death.
Do ye then watch without; for ceaseless care
And vigilance are but the price we pay
For death's delay.

ELIAB.

I hear approaching steps.

DAVID.

What! Whence come they?

(*Enter fugitives.*)

Than he I seek. But now he soon must fall
Into my hand. Then Saul will be at peace.
Here, now, I will attempt to sleep.

(*Saul lies down and sleeps. David and his men cautiously approach.*)

DAVID.

The king!
He sleeps; yet lightly, as in troubled dreams.

ELIAB.

Behold the day of which the Lord hath said
To thee, I will deliver up thine enemy
Into thine hand, that thou may'st do to him
As it shall seem unto thee good.

DAVID.

O, thou
Uncrownéd majesty, where now are all
Thy kingly signs, the reverence and awe
That guard thy name, and make all lesser men
Revere the sacred form of royalty?
Here at my feet thou liest, stripped, exposed,
Whom I may crush like meanest thing that crawls.
Thou art the source of all my woes, the man
Who sought to snare my guileless feet in death
When I had wrought salvation for thy throne;
Who drove me from my dear-bought bride, from friends,
From country, and from home, and sent with hate
My parents' tottering steps to alien lands,
And now pursues my soul e'en to this cave—
Where thou art mine. Home, country, friends, and wife—
All life holds dear—yea, and perhaps the throne,
Are in one blow. (*Draws his sword.*)

Thou diest in thy sins!

(*Suddenly checks himself.*)

—Not by my hand. Thou art the Lord's elect,
My father and my king. The Lord forbid
That I should raise destroying hand against thee.

ELIAB.

Then let me strike; thus shalt thou gain the end
Without the stain.

DAVID.

Stand back! revenge is mine,
And I will heap it on his guilty head;
Yet not as he hath done to me.

(*Cuts off the skirt of Saul's robe.*)

'Tis done.
Retire. He that would touch the king must pass
My sword. (*All retire into the cave.*)
Sleep on, unconscious majesty,
Whilst thou canst rest. [*Retires.*

SAUL. (*Awakening.*)

O sleep, that is not sleep,
But mockery of rest, to him whose breast
Is but a cemetery of slain hopes,
A charnel-house of wrongs! For in the land
Of ghostly dreams the graves are rent, and deeds
The deepest buried rise, and stalk abroad
More grim and ghastly in their rotted shrouds,
Than when first laid away. Sleep opes the door
Upon a spirit world, where vengeful forms
Rise from the shadowy deep, and thronging press
Around the naked soul, that hath forgot

The armor of its waking hours, and stands,
Shivering, exposed to all their venomed darts.
This hour hath been an age of agony,
And clouds of fiends most numerous and fierce
Have just assailed my soul. This weird recess
Must be their native haunt; and even now,
Methinks, I hear their wings as they recede
Into its depths. The sun still shines on high!
And I will haste from this accurséd spot.

(*Goes out of the cave, followed by David.*)

DAVID.

My lord, the king! (*Makes obeisance to the king.*)

SAUL.

David! Is this thy voice?

DAVID.

Wherefore believest thou the words of them
That say, David doth seek thy hurt? For words
Are neither true nor false, but actions show
The heart. Behold, this day thine eyes have seen
Jehovah hath delivered thee to me,
Here in the cave. Some bade me kill thee there:
But I spared thee. I said, I will not raise
My hand against the Lord's anointed king.
Moreover, see, my father, in my hand
Thy garment's skirt: see thou, and know by this,—
That I cut off thy skirt and not thy head,—
That neither evil nor transgression lies
Within my hand. I have not done thee wrong.
Yet thou dost hunt my soul to death. The Lord
Be judge between us, and avenge my wrongs.
As saith an ancient proverb, "Wickedness

Proceedeth from the wicked, but the good
Will spare their enemies." The Lord be judge,
And plead my cause, and save me from thy hand.

SAUL.

My son, thou hast more righteousness than I.
Thou hast repaid me good, while I to thee
Have done but ill. And thou hast shown thy mind
This day. For if one find his enemy
Will he let him escape? Wherefore the Lord
Reward thee for this thing which thou hast done.
I surely know that thou wilt yet be king,
And Israel be established by thy hand.
Swear now, therefore, to me, before the Lord,
That thou wilt not cut off my seed nor name
Out of my father's house.

DAVID.

Thou knowest well,
O king, that I have never sought the throne,
And now desire but to return in peace
Into my land. And I do truly swear,
By Israel's God, that evil shall not come
Upon the house of Saul by David's hand.

SAUL.

Now of a truth I know thou shalt prevail. [*Exit.*

DAVID.

Up, brethren, we will go into our land.
Yet we do ever walk before the sword,
That will not sleep in Saul's unresting hand.

[*Exeunt.*

*Scene II.*—A FIELD AND A WOOD NEAR GIBEAH.

(*Enter David and Jonathan, meeting.*)

DAVID.

O Jonathan, my friend, much I rejoice
To see thy face again!

JONATHAN.

And I in thee:
And yet I tremble at thy peril here.

DAVID.

What have I done? What is my sin against
Thy father, that he seeks to take my life?

JONATHAN.

Nay. God forbid, thou shalt not die. Behold,
My father will do nothing, either great
Or small, but he will show it me; and why
Should he hide this from me? It is not so.

DAVID.

Thy father certainly doth know that thou
Art pleased with me, and he saith, "Let us keep
This thing from Jonathan, lest he be grieved."
But truly as God liveth, and thy soul
Doth live, there's but a step 'twixt me and death.

JONATHAN.

Whatever thou desirest, I will do
For thee.

DAVID.

Perchance thy father's heart may now
Relent toward me, that I again may see

My widowed wife, and dwell amidst my race
In peace. Behold, to-day is the new moon,
And thou wilt sit beside the king at meat.
But let me go that I may hide myself
Till night. Do thou then speak to him for me.
If he say, "Well," thy servant shall have peace:
But if he then be very wroth, be thou
Assured that evil is resolved by him.
Therefore thou shalt deal kindly with thy friend;
For thou hast made a covenant with me
Before the Lord. Yet, if there be in me
Iniquity, slay me thyself; for why
Should'st thou deliver me unto the king?

JONATHAN.

Far be it from me! If I surely knew
That evil were determined by my sire,
Would not I tell it thee?

DAVID.

But who shall tell me?
Or what if he should roughly answer thee?

JONATHAN.

When I have sounded Saul, my sire, behold,
If there be good toward David, and I then
Send not to thee and show it unto thee,
The Lord do so and more to Jonathan.
But if my father still is bent on ill,
Then I will show it thee, that thou may'st go
In peace. The Lord be with thee as he hath
Been with my sire. Not only while I live
Shalt thou show me thy love, that I die not,

But also thou shalt not withdraw thy love
For ever from my house; not even when
The Lord hath cut off every foe of thine
From off the earth. Now let us here renew
Our covenant. Eternal friendship swear
Between thy house and that of Jonathan.

DAVID.

The Lord require it of mine enemies,
If David be not true to thee and thine.

JONATHAN.

O, swear again! God knoweth that I love thee
As mine own soul; for it is knit with thine.

DAVID.

If I forget thee, O my friend, let God
Forget me, and blot out my name forever.

JONATHAN.

Now hide thyself by yonder cliff, and I
Will go to test my father. I will shoot
Three arrows on the side, as though I shot
A mark, and I will send a lad and say,
"Go find the arrows." If I expressly say
Unto the lad, "They're on this side of thee,"
Then do thou come: for there is peace to thee.
But if I say unto the youth, "Behold,
The arrows are beyond thee," go thy way.
Thus shalt thou know my father's mind toward thee.
As to our sacred covenant, behold,
The Lord be judge 'twixt thee and me forever.

[*Exit Jonathan.*

(*David hides himself.*)

(*Enter Abner and Ishbosheth.*)

ISHBOSHETH.

Abner, thou seest that my father's mind
Is sore disquieted because of David, driven
This way and that by gusts of hate and envy,
While in brief calms the sun of reason shines
Dim, struggling forth, but to be darkened soon
By fiercer blasts. As one pursues a shadow,
So does he chase the phantom of his fear,
That yet eludes his grasp. Sure such a king
Is not the man to rule o'er Israel!
My brother Jonathan thou lovest not,
And knowest that his heart is not with us—
A traitor to his father's house. Where now
Are all thy promises to turn the hearts
Of Israel toward me, that I may rule,
Who only of the house of Saul am worthy?

ABNER.

Impatient youth, dost thou not see
That all things work according to my words?
Thy father's mind will not forget its rage
That leads him to his fall, while I am near;
Meanwhile thy brother's shame and thy great worth
I constant keep before the people. Now
Restrain thy chafing mind, and soon will come
The day for action and for manly deeds.

ISHBOSHETH.

Fierce war is my abhorrence. I do loathe
The clash of arms, the sight of blood and death!
Leave that to grosser souls; my tastes, refined,
Do not delight in those revolting scenes.
Give me the court, with wine and women's cheer.

ABNER.

Remain, then, here, amidst thy concubines,
And I will do this work for thee. But know
Thy sister, first, must be my rich reward.
And do not thou forget to rouse the king
To constant sense of my just claim for her.

ISHBOSHETH.

Rely on me for that. My sister, since
Her first mad stand against her father's will,
Hath been more yielding to her fate. Now, since
She thinks her youthful husband slain, she asks
Her days of mourning first to be fulfilled
Ere she become another's. Doubt not, then,
She soon must yield and be thy bride. I go
To work my part. The fitting time hath come,—
The master-workman of all human plans. [*Exit.*

ABNER.

Poor, plotting fool, away! Go, drown thy soul
In wine's red bowl, and waste thy worthless self
In lust's foul snare. None are so blind as those
Who see through others' eyes, who only look
Upon the images of things, and think
That others' thoughts reflected are their own.
Thus, when I show this fop the magic glass
Of flattery, he deems the image there
His own; that he is fit to follow Saul;
And straightway plots against his sire; but works
All to my end. A royal bride soon mine,
The distraught king dethroned or dead, the hearts
Of Israel estranged from Jonathan,
Or, if need be, his life cut off—what then

Shall bar the path of Abner to the throne?
This villain's but the step by which I mount.
But Jonathan appears, and I will haste
To move the king to new designs of ill. [*Exit.*

(*Enter Jonathan with bow and arrows, accompanied by a lad.*)

JONATHAN.

Run, find out now the arrows which I shoot.

(*As the lad runs, shoots an arrow beyond him.*)

Hath not the arrow gone beyond thee? Haste,
Stay not.

(*The lad gathers the arrows, and returns to Jonathan.*)

Go carry them into the city.

(*Gives him the bow and arrows.*)

DAVID.

(*Coming from the wood, and bowing to the earth.*)

Now let thy servant die, even at thy feet!

JONATHAN.

No; rise, my well-belovéd friend. (*Embracing David.*)

DAVID.

I know
The sign; we part, and hope is dead.

JONATHAN.

My soul
Is grieved for thee, my friend, even unto death.

DAVID.

Is there no hope? Am I an exile doomed?

JONATHAN.

Yea, and I, too, have suffered for thy sake.

DAVID.

The Lord forbid that thy pure soul should feel
One pang because of me.

JONATHAN.

The hearts of friends
Cannot diversely feel one sorrow. Yet,
E'en more than mine own grief my soul feels thine.
I spake unto the king for thee; but even
The mention of thy name inflamed his wrath,
Like fire applied to ripened sheaves of grain,
That instant burn in spreading conflagration.
Even so burst forth his rage. Like senseless fire,
Attacking that most near, he seized a spear,
And hurled it at my breast, with angry words
Opprobrious, such as no man can bear,
Even from his sire. In anger fierce I rose.
I will no more sit at his board. And now
I haste, my friend, to bid thee go in peace.

DAVID.

My brother, now thy words are justified,
And God will honor thee to time's last day.
The truest friendship known to men shall be
Even as the love of Jonathan to David.
And I must leave thee! yea, and my poor wife,
And life itself, shut out from all that makes
Existence blest. O, as thou lovest me,
Be thou her shield. Assure her that I live,
And only when I cease to live, shall cease
To love. Beware of cunning Abner; know
That he some evil plots against thy house,
And my sweet bride. Is there a God on high,

That lets the wicked go unpunished thus,
Forgets the just, and leaves this tangled maze
Of good and evil here to work its own
Adjustment! O, had I the power that rules
This world one day, swift vengeance should o'ertake
The wicked in his path, and many wrongs
Be righted!

JONATHAN.

God forgive thy soul's mad cry,
And teach thee soon to know his way.

DAVID.

One friend,
One refuge, only have I left. I flee
To Samuel, the prophet, whose strange words
First called me forth to meet this host of ills.

JONATHAN.

The Lord go with thee, forasmuch as we
Have sworn both in his name, and said, "The Lord
Shall be 'twixt me and thee, between my seed
And thine forever." Go in peace.

DAVID. (*Embracing him.*)

God knows
If I may ever see thy face again.
O Jonathan, my friend, my friend, farewell.

JONATHAN.

Fear not; thou yet shall reign o'er Israel,
And I shall be next unto thee. Farewell!

[*Exeunt.*

*Scene III.*—NAIOTH IN RAMAH.—*Dwelling of the prophet Samuel.*

SAMUEL. (*Praying.*)

How long, O Lord, how long, wilt thou withdraw
Thyself from Israel, and leave thy name
Unhonored and unknown? The rayless earth
Swings black in sin, unlighted by one beam
From thy bright throne: and men forget, while clouds
Obscure the sun, that his great orb still rolls
On high. Thus Israel remembers not
Thy mighty acts; thine outstretched arm, that smote
The land of Egypt, brought them forth, and led
Them through the parted sea with flame and cloud
To Sinai, where thou didst thunder forth
Thine everlasting law. Thy chastisements
And mercies all disdained, this people ask
The Lord of heaven and earth to quit his throne,
And choose an earthly king. The holy ark
Of thine almighty presence lies in dust,
Unhonored and unseen. Thine altar fires
Ascend no more: the voice of those that call
Upon the Lord is heard not in the land.
Him whom thou bad'st me call to rule our race,
On whom the consecrating oil was poured,
Cast out from men, now wanders forth to die,
Accursed. Thy servant, I that early heard
Thy voice and hast so long beheld thy power,
Am now of no avail, and hear thy voice
No more. Forgot by those I served, I die.
O God, dost *thou* still live? Hast *thou* forgot
Thy prophet? Grant one boon, one sign that thou
Dost live and rule on earth. O, let mine eyes
Behold my heart-son, David, ere they close

Forever. Then, O take thy servant home,
For whom thou hast no use on earth.

(*Enter David.*)

He comes!
Mine eyes have seen the promise of the Lord!
Now lettest thou thy servant go in peace.

DAVID.

O man of God, behold thy work! Undo
Thine acts, recall thy words. Curse me instead!
Thy blessing is more heavy than thy curse.
Thy chrism, poured upon my head, hath proved
A flood of evils. Take again thy gift!

SAMUEL.

My son, my son! my prayer to God hath been
To see thy face before I die! And now
Thou comest to reproach. Our granted prayers
Oft prove the chastisement we need. Thy voice,
My heart long yearned to hear, now utters words
That grieve my soul, and show the prophet's work
Is vain, thyself unfit for thine high calling.
Yet it was not my will, but God's, called thee;
I, the unwilling instrument. And thou
Reproachest God! Yet, since thou art his choice,
Thou must have worth which these poor, human eyes
Cannot discern.

DAVID.

My father, I have sinned
Against thee and high Heaven, and am indeed
Not worthy to be called to this great work.
If possible let this preferment pass.
But if I must be great, let me abide
The test of preparation. If by me

Must Righteousness and Truth be born to men,
O, give the strength to bear the great conception.
Thrice happy he whose part it is to serve;
And humblest, most oppressed, is he who stands
Before the people, next to God.

SAMUEL.

My son,
Now do mine eyes behold thy nobleness
Of soul, the wisdom of the choice of God.
Thy coming is the proof to me he lives
And reigns on earth.

DAVID

Doth his o'erruling hand
Descend to me and interfere in this
Concourse of evils for my good?

SAMUEL.

The course
Of Israel displays at every step
The trace of God's direct design and rule
O'er nations and o'er men. Thyself shalt be
The greatest witness to the end of time.
God's call; this ministry of suffering;
His heavy hand constraining in the way;
His rod and wondrous mercy leading on
To glory and dominion without end,
Shall make thy name a dazzling monument,
Gleaming adown the ages with the fact
Of Providence Divine in human life.

DAVID.

But now, my foes are more than I can meet;
A step will bring me to my grave.

SAMUEL.

Fear not:
The seed of God's selecting he will keep;
And fiercest winds shall drive to richest soil,
Where it shall grow to its appointed strength.
God's will moves on through evil and through good,
And worms and worlds alike are crushed before
His mighty step.

DAVID.

If God be on my side,
Who can prevail against me? Come, then, wars
And woes, like the great deluge come! Come, Saul,
Thy royal wrath pour on my head. Let all
The world combine to crush. The will of one
Brave man, clothed on with justice, armed with truth,
Inspired by Heaven's approving voice within,
Must rise and rule triumphant over all.

(*Enter attendant prophet.*)

ATTENDANT.

The servants of the king!

SAMUEL.

Let them come in.
Why come they now whom I have not beheld,
Since, flying from the king's displeasure, here
I came to end in solitude my days?

DAVID.

Perchance Saul seeks me here. O, holy man,
Let not distress fall on thy whitened head
Through me.

SAMUEL.

My son, I do God's work, and leave
The consequence with him. Distress or joy

Or life or death, are not our care. Be true,
Do right, and happiness or grief seek not
Nor shun. They are unworthy of thy thought.
(*Enter messengers of the king.*)

MESSENGER.

The king desires thy presence at the court.

SAMUEL.

Why doth the king of Israel send for me,
A powerless old man long since cast off?

MESSENGER.

His mind is sore disturbed because of David.
His enemies begin to press around:
His counselors and prophets fail, and now
He turns, as to a last resource, to thee,
His only friend and advocate with God.

SAMUEL.

Then let him come to me. I wish for naught
The king can give. He only that seeks not
To rise can walk erect, and need not crawl
To any man for favors.

MESSENGER.

Dost thou dare
Deny the king's request?

SAMUEL.

Who is the king,
That he should be obeyed?

MESSENGER.

The people's choice,
The law personified, the man ordained
By right divine to rule on earth.

SAMUEL.

The curse
Of men, the breaker of the highest law,
Usurper of God's throne, which he would fain
Transmit with his bad blood to baser sons.
Set up again your golden calf! bow down
To that; 'twill do less ill, and will not breed
Its costly kind.

ATTENDANT PROPHET.

The king himself appears!

DAVID.

Thrice have I 'scaped his hand. Here must I fall
At last, beneath the mantle of the man
Of God who brought on me these ills.

SAMUEL.

Nay, nay.
Where is thy new-born faith? Thou shalt not die.
This mantle rude about thee cast can shield
Thee from thy foes, though they be many as
The sons of earth, and great as those that drew
Strong sustenance from her young breast, before
The floods had furrowed it. But now withdraw,
For I will meet the king alone.

DAVID.

Let me be near
To succor thee at need, O holy man.

SAMUEL.

The Lord hath no demand for sword and spear:
The arm of flesh is dust before him. Go. [*Exit David.*
So is thy servant, Lord. Grant me thy strength.

(*Enter Saul and attendants.*)

SAUL.

O Samuel, I come to ask thee now
To turn again with me and intercede
In my behalf.

SAMUEL.

What! hath thy trouble come,
That thou dost seek the Lord? There's naught like grief
To make mankind remember God.

SAUL.

My soul
Is sore disquieted by cares within
And enemies without. Hast thou no love
For Israel, that thou car'st not what foes
Assail her gates?

SAMUEL.

Thy sins, unworthy king,
Have brought these evils on our race. Alas!
The many innocent must feel the wrongs
Of evil doers in high places. Thou,
Exalted high as heaven, shalt be cast down
To hell. Through disobedience and pride
The gift of God made wreck—thy power to bless
Thy people, honor God, and leave a name
High o'er all rulers, cast away—King Saul
Shall be to latest day of time, a name
Conspicuous for good to evil turned,
As his who walketh up and down the earth,
To seek revenge for his great fall from heaven.

SAUL.

Hath not thy God a place for pardon left?

SAMUEL.

He can forgive, but not undo. For God
Himself cannot recall the past. Thine act
Performed, is done, and stands forever linked
With its reward of evil or of good.
The rock worn by the dashing waves, still bears
Their impress, though they long have ceased to roll.
Thou hast rejected God, and he hath cast
Thee down from being king.

SAUL.

I am *thy* king,
And thou shalt go with me.

SAMUEL.

I will not go
Nor stay with thee, thou son of Belial, doomed;
Command thy slaves as wicked as thyself:
But know that I, who made thee king, owe not
Allegiance to any earthly power. (*Turns to go.*)

SAUL.

Call on thy God. He shall not rescue thee
Now from my hand.

(*Seizes the prophet's robe, which in the struggle is torn.*)

SAMUEL.

As thou hast rent this robe,
So hath God rent the kingdom from thy hand,
And given it to a worthier than thou,
Even to thy neighbor, David.

SAUL.

What! am I
To be forever haunted by that name,

That rouses all the demons in my breast!
Must I be taunted with thy prophecies,
To which I owe all this unrest! False seer,
On thee shall fall the merit of thy deeds.
In vain thy boasted aid. Thy God lives not,
Or sits on high, untroubled by the strifes
Of this small world. Seize him, my servants, true;
Teach him to show respect to them who rule.

SAMUEL.

Beware how thou call'st down the wrath of Heaven;
The priest of most-high God, himself the least
Of human kind, is mightier through Him
He serves, than all the kings that rule. Great God,
Protect thy servant from this man!

SAUL.

Pray on,
Old man! Thy God is deaf, perhaps, or sleeps,
Or is away.
(*To his attendants.*)
Seize him! why stand ye there?
(*Attendants advance toward Samuel.*)

SAMUEL.

The power of the Lord be on ye! Stand! (*They stop.*)
Fall! (*They fall upon their faces to the ground.*)
There lie groveling in your native dust!

SAUL.

Fiend! sorcerer! thy hellish arts may awe
My slaves, but not the heart of royalty. (*Draws his sword.*)
Now die! (*Advances upon him.*)

SAMUEL.

O, can the chosen of heaven become
The prey of hell! God's eye is on thy heart,
And sees the blackness *there!*
(*Saul quails before the prophet, and sinks slowly to the earth.*)
His lightning glance
Reveals thy heart's deep horrors to thyself—
And here thou liest, self-condemned, before
The awful presence of the Just and Pure.
O God, behold thy curse where once thou bad'st
Me bless; then take me from this sin-cursed earth.

(*Re-enter David.*)

DAVID.

O man of God, I come to die with thee.

SAMUEL.

Behold thine enemies beneath thy feet.
Thus shall the Lord fulfill his words to thee,
To put thy foes beneath thee, and exalt
Thy throne above thy people, Israel.—
My son, place now thine arm about my frame
Worn out by time, and now by these events
Exhausted quite. My failing breath comes slow;—
The days of Samuel are numbered.

DAVID.

Nay,
My father, live! my only strength on earth,
My light through which I see the hand above,
The only light of God in this dark land,
Leave not the world in night.

DAVID.

Were he the vilest of the race of men,
And tenfold more my foe, yet would I spare;
For vengeance is the Lord's. He will repay.
Haste we to yonder cliffs.

(*They go out of the camp, and ascend a hill opposite. Calls to the king's officers.*)

Abner, awake!
Why sleepest thou? Dost thou not answer, Abner?

ABNER. (*Awaking.*)

And who art thou that criest to the king?

DAVID.

Is not Abner a brave man! Who is like
To thee in Israel! And wherefore, then,
Hast thou not kept thy lord the king? Behold,
There came one of the people in to slay
The king. This is not good that thou hast done.
Now, by the Lord, ye ought to die, because
Ye have not kept your master, God's anointed.
Behold, and now see where the king's spear is,
That stood beside his couch to mark his place.

SAUL.

Is this thy voice, David, my son, my son?

DAVID.

It is my voice, my lord, O king. Wherefore
Dost thou pursue thus after me, thy son?
What have I done? What ill is in my hand?
Now, therefore, hear my words: If God have stirred
Thee up against me, then let him accept
An offering. But if the sons of men,

Curséd be they, for they have driven me out
From dwelling in the heritage of God.
Now, therefore, let my blood not fall to earth
Before the face of God.

SAUL.

Yea, I have sinned.
Return, my son, my son, for I will do
Thee harm no more, because my life this day
Was precious in thine eyes. Behold how I
Have played the fool, and erred exceedingly.

DAVID.

Behold thy spear! Let one of the young men
Come over and receive it. May the Lord
Render to every man his righteousness
According to his acts; for as thy life
Was precious in mine eyes this day, so let
My life be precious in his sight; let him
Deliver me from all my tribulation.

SAUL.

Blesséd be thou, my son, David: thou shalt
Both do great things, and also still prevail.

ABNER.

O king, behold, he sought thy life, and I,
Awaking, saved thee from his hand.

SAUL.

Away!
Up, Israel, to your tents, for I will war
No more against the blameless son of Jesse.

[*Exeunt Saul and soldiers.*

ABNER.

In vain, base-born, dost thou persuade the king,
For thou shalt have no peace whilst Abner lives.

DAVID.

False friend of Saul's, I know thy heart
And all its dark designs, for thou dost plot
Against the king thou claim'st to serve, and stir'st
His mind against the innocent. So may'st
Thou fall by guile, and perish utterly.

ABNER.

Abandoned by thy God, thy family
And friends, worse than cut off art thou.

DAVID.

Not so:
God waiteth long, but never doth forget.
And woman's love is mine beyond recall.

ABNER.

A marvelous cheat is God—a fiction strange,
Self-wrought, self-taught, and only half believed;
And woman's constancy's a thing of air.

DAVID.

Son of the prince of hell, thou liest! Thou
Shalt own thy words, and thou, thyself, as false
As fiends that rule thy breast.

ABNER.

Deluded wretch,
'Tis well thou art removed, or this sharp steel
Would end thy foolish speech and life together.
But words can slay more swift and sure than swords.
Know, then, poor fool, thy boasted love is false.

The daughter of the king has cast thee off,
And formed alliance with a man that knows
Her worth, and how to profit by it. Thy wife
Is mine; I leave thee that. [*Exit.*

DAVID.

Come, all ye floods,
And drown again the world! Your mountains roll
Upon this breast, for David is betrayed
By her he loved. If woman be not true,
There is no truth in God, and then no God.
Then man hath no hereafter, life no worth,
And I will cast it in the scale 'gainst death,
Regardless which goes down. Mine eye shall see
If this be true; if truth be falsehood—love
Be hate—right, wrong—and virtue, vice—if all
Distinctions be but names born of the dreams
Of idle men, which they in pride to see
Their vagrant offspring tricked thus fair, have raised
Unto the skies, and hung upon the skirts
Of an imagined, unseen God. Mine eyes
Then having seen the sun from heaven fall,
Thrice welcome death! Lay this erected dust
Low with its fellows. But if not true—not?
God, can it be!—Why does the anguished heart
Invoke that name? What if there be a God
Whom man made not, and man cannot destroy!
[*Exit.*

*Scene II.*—GIBEAH.—*An apartment in the dwelling of the King.*

(*Enter Sarah and Rachel.*)

RACHEL.

How long, my sister, wilt thou mourn for him
Who is no more, and grieve thyself for naught?

SARAH.

Tell me how long the prisoner will sigh
For liberty, the dungeon-bound for light.

RACHEL.

The captive unto death finds no release;
The prisoner of the tomb sees light no more.

SARAH.

Perchance my husband lives, and shall I cease
To sigh for his return, or lay aside
My grief while doubtful is his fate? Alive,
My heart wanders distressed with him; or dead,
Lies in his grave.

RACHEL.

It is unseemly thus
To cling to one cut off by God, and mock
His purposes by wantonness of grief.
Thou wrong'st thyself not to accept the means
He gives for thy return to peace and joy.

SARAH.

How prone are we to cast our own ill deeds
On God, and what our hearts desire account
His providence!

RACHEL.

Thou dost not, then, reject
The suit of Abner and his honored name?

SARAH.

My days of mourning first must be fulfilled,
Before I can again become a bride.

RACHEL.

Thy days, according to our law, are full,
And thou dost yet delay. Thy course, I think,
My sister, is but a device by which
To escape thy suitor's wish and Saul's command.
Beware, frail woman, how thou dost defy
The will of those whom God hath made our lords.

SARAH.

Degrade not His high name to uphold what
The untutored soul knows to be false. That man,
I tell thee now, shall never be my lord.
My sister, as thou lovest me, let me
Not hear his name again.

RACHEL.

Wilt thou oppose
All power and law, both human and divine?
The king commands; it is thy country's voice.
Thy father speaks; it is the word of God.

SARAH.

Obedience to God and parents, learn
We first with infant speech. But to each soul
There comes a time when law divine must find
Interpreter within. The truth of God
Must come to us untainted by the touch

Of any earthly vessel. That time has come.
The law within my breast I must obey,
And trust it will be found at one with God's.

RACHEL.

I cannot tread this unknown way with thee.

SARAH.

Then I must walk alone.

RACHEL.

Is this thy will?

SARAH.

It surely is.

RACHEL.

Wilt thou not be constrained?

SARAH.

Not while my soul is free.

RACHEL.

I weep for thee.

SARAH.

Go weep for those who, bound in willing chains,
Condemn the heart's pure flame to die, unfed
By streams of holiest love.

RACHEL.

Dost thou refuse
All sympathy?

SARAH.

The sympathy of those
Who cannot read the heart, can little soothe
Its smart.

RACHEL.

Thou art my sister, then, no more:
Since thou wilt rend kind nature's tie.

SARAH.

O, why
Are kindred forms the homes of alien souls,
That fly as far as earth is from the stars,
To seek their kind?

RACHEL.

Since thou dost fly from me,
Strange sister, I will leave thee to thy fate;
I hope thou may'st yet find thy chosen kind,
For which thou shun'st thy kin.

SARAH.

May Heaven fulfill
Thy words, and grant this weary, wandering heart
Its long-sought rest!

RACHEL.

My sister, I am thine!
I will not leave thee desolate. What woes
May come, they shall descend alike on both.

SARAH.

O, now thou art the sister of my heart!

(*Enter Saul, Abner, and attendants.*)

SAUL.

My daughter, now the time gives no delay,
That thou should'st hesitate to be the wife
Of this brave, honorable man. Yield now,
And add another cord unto my love,
Another prop beneath my falling state.

SARAH.

Thou art my sire, and hast a parent's right;
I am thy child, and feel a daughter's love;
Thou art a king, and hast a sovereign's power;
I am a woman, and have a woman's heart.
O, do not overstep the parent's right;
O, do not alienate a daughter's love;
Do not abuse thy Heaven-granted power;
O, then respect the woman's loving heart.
I yield thee love, obedience, and trust:
O, hear my prayer; wrong not thyself and me.

SAUL.

What mean those words? Dost thou refuse to do
My will?

SARAH.

My father, thou dost know my heart
Is his to whom thou gavest me, my young,
My noble husband.

ABNER.

Ah! is that the cause
Of all this wandering speech? Know then, proud one,
Thy shepherd spouse will come to thee no more;
For he is dead.

SARAH.

Dost know whereof thou speak'st?

ABNER.

As well as one may know what he has seen.
He surely has gone down to lasting death.

SARAH.

What! David dead, and yet the world goes on!
Bright day succeeds black night! Flowers bloom, birds sing!
All nature's heartless joy falls on the soul
More heavy than the general wreck of worlds.
The mighty millstones of the universe
Grind on and on, and crush between our griefs
And joys, that cannot jar the ponderous wheels
In their eternal course. Are we then thrown
'Midst an inexorable machine that hath
No maker or controller? Nay. The sun
That changeless shines on tombs, is younger far
Than I, and hath his day to fade from heaven.
I love—and am immortal. This assurance
In my breast links me with Him who stayed the sun
For Joshua—whose every word and act
Hath been but love since his creating breath
Made us of him a part. The spirit rules;
And nature's use is but to body forth
The world within. Love conquers all, and dies
Only with God. My husband is not dead!

SAUL.

Alive or dead, he is no more thy husband.
No longer vex mine ear with thy vain words.
Prepare thyself to be the wife of him,
To whom I am resolved to give thee now.

SARAH.

O God! O David! let me be with *thee.*
Come, take me in thy spirit-arms and bear
Me to the tomb. Death, let me be thy bride,

That thus I may escape this living death
Of wedlock without love. He comes! he comes!
His shadow vails mine eyes.

(*Faints and is caught by Abner.*)

ABNER.

Some spirit strange,
Most surely doth possess her.

(*Shouts and knocking on the door without.*)

SAUL.

What means that noise?
What evil now stands knocking at my gate?

(*Enter David under the guise of madness.*)

DAVID.

David is dead, and God is dead! The world
Is dead! Ye all are ghosts that walk abroad
Untombed! Haste to your yawning graves!—The sun
Hath fallen out of heaven.—The moon is turned
To blood.—The serpent hath betrayed the woman;—
She, all mankind;—and there they are! Ha! ha!
The fruit is wondrous sweet. Come eat of it.
But, ah! the serpent's sting is at the core.—
To hell,—to hell!—

SARAH. (*Recovering.*)

O God, is this the grave?
Alas! we live.—And thou?—art thou David?

DAVID.

Away!—touch not the dead.

SARAH.

O! do I live?

DAVID.

'Tis thou hast slain me. Live, and be accursed!
The happy are the dead.

RACHEL.

Stupendous wreck
Of a most noble mind!

ABNER.

Saul, shall I slay him?

SAUL.

Ye see the man is mad. Why have ye brought
Him in to play the madman in my sight?
Away with him. Bind him. Confine him where
He will no more disturb my kingdom's peace,
Or safety of my throne. The hand of fate
Is surely turned, at last, against my foes.

DAVID.

All men are mad! I am less mad than thou
That deem'st thyself a king. No royal crown
Is on thy head; no scepter in thy hand.
Thou art the shadow of a king, from whom
The substance of authority long since
Hath fled away.

SAUL.

No more! Bind the madman!
Away with him!

DAVID.

Which one? Dost thou not see
The sword that hangs above thy head? Thy doom
Is heavier than mine. I go to chains;—
But thou, to death.

ABNER.

Are these a madman's words?

DAVID.

Thou serpent, to thy native slime! Thy trail
Is over all this house. The charméd bird
Lies quivering in thy folds.—Sweet thing, it once
Was mine! But now,—I'm mad! I'm mad!

[*Exit with the guard.*

SAUL.

He's gone;
But heaviness remains upon my soul,
That will not go. Women, leave us, leave us,
For weightier matters now engage our thoughts.

SARAH.

God's vengeance fall on those that wrought this woe!

[*Exeunt Sarah and Rachel.*

ABNER.

This wretch hath cast himself upon thy sword,
O king; but hold thy hand, and thou art rid
Of him forever.

SAUL.

Urged by fiends within,
Confined by fates without, I dash myself
In vain against th' invisible bars. Thy words
Have brought me only ill. I will be led
By them no more.

ABNER.

Had'st thou obeyed them all
Thou would'st not now say this.

SAUL.

I am the king
That gives commands, and not he who obeys.
Thou hast too far pushed on thy will, and I
Will have no more of thine advice. Leave me!

ABNER.

This, this is the reward of those that serve
Their king! to hang upon his every word;
If he be sad, to mourn; if he but smile,
Rejoice; to lose the birthright owned
By meanest boor, and be no more a man;
Transformed into a vestment, fitted close
Even to his leanness and deformity;
Then, in his service rent and worn, at last
Cast off to beggars. Such is Abner now,
And yet thine only shield against the blasts
That howl about thy throne. O king, I go.

(*Enter messenger.*)

MESSENGER.

O king, the valiant Jonathan, thy son,
Sends greeting, and reports the foe is driven
Before him. But still others gather round
On every side, and threaten to devour
Thy kingdom. As thick clouds of locusts come,
Loud roaring, from the south, darkening the sun,
And blasting, as by fire, whate'er they touch,
So from Philistia thy swarming foes
Press on, destroying as they come. Then haste

To summon all the hosts of Israel,
Thy captains, and thine own unconquered might.

SAUL.

No peace is mine! I with my scepter took
The sword, and lay it down only with life.
Awake, then, war! thou great destroyer, rage
Till all our foes are in the dust.—My words
Forgive, great Abner; draw thy sword.
Philistia shall tremble at thy shout,
And Israel obey thy mighty voice.

ABNER.

O king, I take thee at thy royal word,
And raise my arm again in thy defense.

SAUL.

I sorely am perplexed by all these ills,
And seek in vain from prophet and from priest
Direction for my steps in this dark hour.
Know ye of one that hath o'er spirits power
To draw from them forecast of great events?

ATTENDANT.

Thou hast cut off all wizards from the land;
Yet still, at Endor, doth a woman live
Familiar with all spirits, who through them
Doth know the curtained future as the past.

SAUL.

Enough. Away! I will to her, and then
To war, whose thunder tones decide the fate
Of nations and of men beyond dispute.

[*Exeunt.*

*Scene III.* — INTERIOR OF THE HUT OF THE WITCH OF ENDOR. — *Instruments of Divination and Necromancy scattered about. Night.*

WITCH.

False arts are powerless for aught but ill.
I can call up the dead, but have no hold
On life, to keep it in this withered frame.
The dim and shadowy forms that fill my cell
Cannot ward off life's ills or death's sure step.
The ghosts I summon up but mock my want,
And have no power to dull fierce hunger's tooth.
Though I can curdle up the blood with fear,
I cannot move the heart. Though I have power
O'er spirits of the air, of earth and hell,
To call them up, I cannot call one shoot
Of sweet, life-giving grain up from the earth.
The unsubstantial visions of the brain
Cannot supply the want of bread. All gifts,
All insight, foresight, and all hidden lore,
All mental powers, are weak, are worse than vain,
Combined, against the stomach's ceaseless cry.
Hence, idle arts! Give me no thought but bread,
No power but to gain it.

(*Enter Saul disguised, with two attendants.*)

Why seek ye
My cell? I am a woman, old and poor,
And have nothing of worth to you. O, spare
My life, 'tis all I have, a paltry thing,
A grievous burden; yet it hath so worn
Its place into this frame, these weary years
We have toiled on together, that I beg
To bear it yet a little further on,

Before death cuts it loose above the grave.
Take all, but spare my life.

ATTENDANT.

Be silent, witch!

SAUL.

We seek no harm. I pray thee now divine
To me by thy familiar spirit. Bring
Him up to me whom I shall name to thee.

WITCH.

Behold, thou knowest what King Saul hath done.
He hath cut off out of the land all those
That have familiar spirits, and all wizards.
Wherefore, then, layest thou a snare for me,
To cause my death?

SAUL.

I swear, as God doth live,
No punishment shall come to thee for this.

WITCH.

Whom, then, shall I call up to thee?

SAUL.

Bring up
The prophet Samuel.

WITCH.

Believest thou
There is a power on earth to call the soul
From its far resting-place back to its dust?

SAUL.

I know not, and care not what spell or power
Of earth, or air, or hell, thou conjurest by;
But call him up whom I have named to thee.

WITCH.

It is a hard thing thou dost ask. But wait:—
Ye viewless spirits of the wandering air,
The all-engulfing, soundless, shoreless sea,
Ye troubled spirits of a banished world,
Pursued by fierce and vengeful fates through all
The trackless spaces of the universe;
Ye ever-present powers whose breath we feel,
But know not whence ye come or whither go,
Who speak in summer winds, and thunder's roar,
Smite with the whirlwind's unseen hand, and blast
The earth by furnace-breath of dread simooms:—
On ye, all-powerful ones, I call; bring forth
The dead.

SAUL.

Thy conjuration is in vain.
Extend thy wand o'er other powers.

WITCH.

Awake,
Ye slumbering demons of the earth and sea;
Forth from your hidden haunts and caverns come!
Ye that dwell in the bowels of the earth,
Hard by the firm foundations of the hills,
Where gleam broad seams of gold, with sparkling gems,
And still more priceless iron's ruddy ore,
With adamant, and sulphur that feeds fire
To burning mountains:—Ye, all ye, that live
Within the sea's dark depths, which sole defy
The sun's all-piercing eye, where roll and fight
Huge, unimagined monsters 'mid the broad,
Deep pillars of the earth:—Ye that supply

The marvelous, unapprehended force
Of all that lives and grows upon this globe,
That pour th' unfailing streams of earth's life-blood
Into the myriad molds of being; who
Run to and fro upon the lightning's feet,
Ministers of the fierce, far-working sun:—
And ye whose combats burst the rock-ribbed sides
Of this old, bellowing world:—ye I invoke
From cavern and from deep; from flaming mount;
From springs of life! By all your potent names,
Give up the dead!

SAUL.

Yet he comes not, O witch.
Am I to be thus foiled? Call other powers,
Yea, stir the depths of hell herself, but I
Will be obeyed. Deceive me not, or die.

WITCH.

Ye demons hot from hell; by all your hate
Of man and fear of God; by your abode
Fierce flaming with unquenchéd fires; by pangs
That pierce, and passions that consume, the soul;
By him that sits high on the throne of hell,
Exalted by his miseries supreme;
By all the hosts from heaven fallen; by all
The damnéd souls of men dragged down from earth,
And by the smoke of torment that ascends
Forever—I conjure ye, yield the dead.
Ye spirits of the air, demons of earth,
And fiends of hell, conspire, combine your powers;
*If in your vast* domains, give up the soul
*For whom I* call. My spells have never failed.

Mock me not now! unfold! bring forth!—In vain!
Then, spirits of the air, sweep me away!
Earth-demons, swallow up! Hell-fiends embrace,
And in your fiery arms bear to your flames!

SAUL.

Thy spirit-forces fail to bless or curse.
The arm of flesh will strike more swift and sure;
One moment and it falls. Say if there be
One other power which thou hast not invoked:
Speak quick, or meet thy fate.

WITCH.

There is one name,
More dread, more powerful than all combined;
A name that I have never dared to breathe.
Thou dost compel; on thee be all the event.
That awful name, high over earth and hell
And heaven, I now invoke: JEHOVAH, God
Of Israel—

SAUL.

Speak not that dreadful name!

WITCH.

On thee I call. Bring forth the slumbering dead.

(*Spirit forms rise and disappear.*)

Ye gods!—back! back! Saul, why hast thou deceived me?
Thou art the king.

SAUL.

Woman, be not afraid:
*What sawest* thou?

WITCH.

I saw the gods ascending
Out of the earth, and one—

SAUL.

What form hath he?

WITCH.

Behold, an old man cometh up: he wears
The prophet's mantle.

(*Ghost of Samuel rises.*)

SAUL.

Yea, 'tis he! 'tis he!

GHOST.

Why hast thou called me up from death's long rest?

SAUL.

I sorely am distressed. Philistia
Makes war against my country, and the Lord
Deserteth me, and answereth me no more
By prophets nor by dreams; I have called thee
Therefore, that thou mayest make known to me
What I shall do.

GHOST.

Wherefore, then, dost thou ask
Of me, seeing the Lord is turned from thee,
And is become thine enemy?

SAUL.

O, speak,
Great shade of him that was the voice of God;

Break not the silence of the tomb for naught;
Thou, first of buried men to visit earth.
By Him who bade thee rise, reveal my fate,
Make known the issue of this threatening cloud
That hovers o'er our land. Dread prophet, speak!

GHOST.

The Lord has done to thee as I declared;
For he hath rent the kingdom from thy hand
And given it to thy neighbor, even David.
Because thou hast not heard the voice of God,
Nor executed his fierce wrath decreed
'Gainst Amalek; therefore hath he done this
To thee this day. Moreover, know that God
Will also give up Israel, with thee,
Into the hand of their Philistine foes.
To-morrow thou shalt be with me! Thy sons,
And thou—with me. [*Descends.*

SAUL. (*Falling on his face.*)
O God, is this the end!

ATTENDANT.

Long abstinence has taken away his strength,
And now this fearful sight o'ercomes him quite.

SAUL.

O, spirit dread, shade of the just, stay, stay!
Reverse thy words: recall my doom. O, let
Me live to rectify my wrongs. O thou,
That from the grave dost utter Heaven's decrees,
Rise, rise again to bless, as in my youth.
O, reverend shade, speak comfort to thy son.

August and awful majesty of death,
The heart of Saul is turned to dust before thee;
Pierce not my soul with that cold, fixéd look;
Those deep and solemn tones that sound my knell.
Dread vision, change thine aspect stern; O, speak
Again and tell me all is not yet lost.

WITCH.

O king, rise, eat, I pray, and be sustained.

SAUL.

I will not eat till I again behold
This spirit of the dead, and hear his voice.—
Rise, rise, great one! By Him who conquers death
I bid thee break again his bonds; come forth!
I pray—implore thee—come! speak, speak again!

(*Ghost of Samuel again rises.*)

He comes! Prophetic, dreadful ghost! He speaks.

GHOST.

To-morrow shalt thou be with me—with me;—
Thou and thy sons, with many valiant souls
Of Hebrews slain, shall then go down to death,
And be in spirit-world with me—with me!

(*Descends slowly.*)

SAUL.

Back to the shades of death, thou perjured ghost;—
Thou liest! Go breathe damnation on the lost,
Thou fiend that steal'st a saintly garb to mask
Thy damning deeds; but come not here to curse.
Down to thy native hell, false spirit, down!
My soul is proof against thy fiendish arts.
I fear thee not, nor him who sent thee here.
Yea, summon all thy hell-born host; call up

Thy spirit powers; I do defy them all.
Saul, king of Israel, dies in his time,
By mortal hand, in strong, death-dealing fight,
And fears not all the incorporeal shapes
That dwell beneath the earth. Back to the prince
Of hell, and say he lies. Or if the King
Of heaven have sent thee here to harrow up
My soul, even though thou be the shade of him
Who told me true on earth, I brave ye all.
Yea, rear before mine eyes the awful form
Of death. The phantom, vast, obscure, and dread;
With vain, imagined terrors clad, and armed
With darts forged of the fears of timid souls,
Seen nigh, cannot appal heroic hearts.
His shafts fall idle at my feet. I fear
Thee not, all conquering one. Yea, gloom on me!
O'erwhelm me 'neath the shadow of thy wings,
Terrific shape; I meet thee, face to face,
And scorn thy boasted powers. To-morrow? Now,
This moment, come; here we will wage our fight
For my poor soul, conspired against by heaven
And hell; though doomed and damned, yet not dismayed.
Yea, here, I yet defy hell, heaven, and death!

(*Falls to the earth.*)

# ACT V.

*Scene I.*—A DUNGEON.—*David confined.*

DAVID.

Not dead, yet buried from the sight of men.
Not mad, yet suffering woes and wrongs to make
Pale reason reel and totter from her throne.
Would that this fervid brain might melt, which yet
Will not dissolve. O, how the soul doth love
Her wretched tenement, whence every joy
Hath fled, where howling winds of adverse fate
Come rushing through a hundred crevices,
And shout their dirges round its barren walls!
Would I could rend this robe of flesh, that clogs
My fierce desire! But nature hath so knit
Its seams, and joined the soul by living cords
To every part, that she resents each rude,
Unkind approach, and makes man powerless
To raise destroying hands against himself.
The current of young life flows on too strong
To be dammed up by early griefs, and not
Till it hath been diverted and drunk up
By many woes can it be rudely stayed.
He who hath locked the soul within this cell
Doth hold the key, and only from without
Can it be turned to set the spirit free.
So must I wait his time, e'en though my soul
Doth beat against its walls, as I against
These dungeon bars, while yet my enemies
Without retain the key. But hark! it grates:
It turns! Who comes? (*Enter Sarah.*)

SARAH.

I come, dear stricken one,
To bring thee hence.

DAVID.

'Tis thou that brought me here!
Hence from my sight, thou living lie, that makes
Fair truth herself a fraud; that blots the sun
Out of the sky, drags God from heaven, and sends
Despairing man, blind, groping through the world
To find his rest, a miserable grave!
Go, join with sin, and propagate perdition!

SARAH.

O! do I hear? does David speak these words,
That pierce my bruiséd heart? God, how have I
Offended thee, that this, thy heaviest stroke,
Should fall on me!

DAVID.

Dost ask what thou hast done?
Behold! Thy husband, young, and fair, and true,
Thou hast betrayed, and given thyself to one
Warped, blasted to the heart, by blights of sin.
O reason, virtue, love, doff these fair shapes!
Stand as ye are—the hollow snares by which
Deluded men are dragged to hell.

SARAH.

No more:
Such madness doth possess thy mind.

DAVID.

I speak
Not now the words of frenzy, but of fact.
Mine eyes have seen what I declare. 'Tis thou
Art mad;—and yet I know weak woman's love

Of power. Her bosom, stirred by every breath
Of love, cannot retain its impress long,
But shows the image of each passing cloud.

SARAH.

Doth reason creep back to her shattered seat?

DAVID.

I am not mad. God grant I were, that thus
I might forget the falsehood fair before me!

SARAH.

O Heaven, sustain my soul! O David, dear,
Dear one, let me speak to thy hearing mind.
I yet am thine, and wholly thine, as true
As when I gave thee safe escape, and spared
Myself for thee at peril of my life.
Dost hear? Believe? The daughter of King Saul
Is made of that true stuff that knows no fear,
No law, but love. I live, and living must
Be true. Then do not kill me with a doubt.

DAVID.

Doubt thee! thou truest, best of woman kind!
'Tis I should die for having doubted thee.
O, madman that I truly was! O, fool!
To be thus duped. O, villain! thus to add
One pang to thine all-suffering soul;—and all
For me! O, hate me! give one word, one look,
To show thou seest my unworthiness.

SARAH.

O, worthiest, noblest son of Israel,
Now are my tears and sorrows all forgot,

To know thou livest and thy reason rules.
Whilst thou wast gone, my life was one long, fierce
Death-struggle with the powers of earth and hell;
A wandering lone and comfortless in night;
A groping, falling, struggling through the waste,
Unlighted by one ray, save of the far,
So distant stars, that told of something fixed
Above this fleeting world. But now, with thee,
The full-orbed sun is risen; and the stars
Withdraw, for night is changed to day. O, day
Made bright, most glorious, by the clouds that hung
Above the eastern mountain tops, and draped
Its morning. Live, sweet, lowly germ of love;
Creep toward the light. The sun, thy bridegroom, comes
And clothes thee in the green robes of rejoicing.

DAVID.

My beauteous star, thou art more firmly fixed
Than all the everlasting spheres on high.
Woman *is* true. God reigns, and life hath yet
A purpose grand, linked with his vast designs.

SARAH.

Now go; since God doth order all thy ways,
I do not fear; and love's true monitor
Whispers within our parting will be brief.
The whirlwind of God's providence comes on;
And when the fiery blast hath passed away,
What prostrate and consumed, and what erect
Unscathed, will show the hiding of his power
And will.

DAVID.

Let, then, the tempests rage, and burn
Whate'er created thing, or beast, or man,
Earth's bosom holds. Let this majestic firmament
Be rent; the pillars of the deep be moved;
And this brave, solid earth tremble and reel;
Yet will not I be moved; I hold God's hand.

SARAH.

My husband, as thou standest here, I see
Thy form expand until it reaches heaven.
The ages past are gathered in one hand,
While from the other flows eternal truth
To all the unborn years. The things of God
Are much too high for me; my love to him
Goes up through thee. O! blest be human love;
Without which love divine would fail to find
An entrance into human hearts!

DAVID.

And blest
Be woman! without whom, virtue, truth, and all
Things fairest, best, would want a living form
In mind of man, by which to be expressed.
Thus woman, man, and God, are three in one.

SARAH.

And being one, cannot be put apart
By life or death, things past or things to come.
Thine outward form now goes far from my sight,
Yet to my heart thou ever wilt be near.

DAVID.

Again I go; but never went man forth
To war with life's stern facts more strongly armed

Than with unshaken trust in God and faith
In woman. [*Exit.*

SARAH.

Break, break, ye prison walls! sink, fall,
Fade into viewless air! so vain are ye,
So powerless to bind the will of man.
From dungeon walls have risen, and will rise,
More souls to thrones on high, and in the hearts
Of men, than from all ranks of power on earth.
For time is long, life short, and God is just. [*Exit.*

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*Scene II.*—A BATTLE FIELD.—*Enter Jonathan with soldiers.*

JONATHAN.

O! that David or the king would come! In vain,
Brave sons of Israel, do ye oppose
This swelling host. For every infidel
Struck down, a hundred rise to take his place.
The enemies of God are more than they
That be with us. But were great David here,
Whose arm laid low Philistia's boasted strength,
Before his battle shout and mighty hand
The routed foe would flee like frightened sheep;
And we, led on by his God-guided feet,
Would sweep away this horde like locust swarms
Driven by the sharp east wind into the sea.
Why hath the king thus cast away the strength
Of Israel, his kingdom's brightest shield?
Why yet delays to meet his country's foes,
With Abner and his mighty men to rush
Into the battle-breach? Gird up your hearts!
If few, the firmer must we stand. A host

Is every man whose soul is undismayed.

(*Enter soldier.*)

SOLDIER.

A band of troops, great captain, come, led on
By one, tall, towering o'er the rest, who seems,
By his proud step and martial mien, a chief
Of warlike lust, who scents the battle smoke
Like lion raging for his nightly prey.

JONATHAN.

It must be,—yea, it is,—the king.

(*Enter Saul, Abner, officers, and soldiers.*)

SAUL.

My son,
My royal son, more princely in thy deeds
And noble soul than in thy name, receive
My thanks for thy brave stand against our foes.

JONATHAN.

My father and my king, I have but done
My due to thee, our country, and our God.

SAUL.

Let me not hear that name. We wage this war
Without his aid; yea, even against his power.

JONATHAN.

He that hath brought us to this promised land,
And given it us for an inheritance,
Will not now drive his people forth accursed.

SAUL.

My son, the prophet from beyond the grave
Hath spoken, and declared that Israel

This day shall be delivered to their foes,
And we, both thou and I, go down to death.

JONATHAN.

No prophet of the Lord could speak such words.

SAUL.

Be it God's voice, or lying spirit sent
To quell my soul, it still is powerless
To move my heart or change my fixed resolve.
Let others rush to war impelled by lust
Of power, promotion, or renown; led on
By hope's alluring voice, that sings of fame
And honor dear to all true men; inspired
By country's stirring call; sustained by prayers
Of priests and promises of victory,
Rewards beyond the grave, and monuments,
And grateful memory in the hearts of men:
But I go forth to war with fate foretold,
To known defeat, disgrace, and doom of death;
The curse of God still ringing on my ears,
While from afar the voice of unborn men
Comes up to execrate the name of Saul.
O, could I meet my foes! Would the viewless shapes
That hover round to baffle and defeat
Assume a form that might be seen and touched,
Though grim, gigantic, armed with nameless powers
And terrors strange, yet should they feel the stroke
Of this keen sword. O! could I strike down through
The ranks of time, and still the chiding voice
Of years to come, then could I die content.
But I will die a free, unconquered soul.
Lead on, that I may face my mortal foes.

On them shall fall the vengeance, hate, and all
The pent-up wrath and wrongs that fire my soul.
Woe, woe to him of woman born that meets
My sword this day! Lead on!

JONATHAN.

No fear of death
Shall clog my soul in its firm, onward march
To the trumpet-call of country, king, and God.
Great deeds shall this dark day be wrought, wherewith
The utmost corridors of time shall ring.

ABNER.

If these strange prophecies be true, the sun
That sets this day shall see my star arise. [*Exeunt.*

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*Scene III.*—ANOTHER PART OF THE BATTLE-FIELD.—*Sounds of battle in the distance, gradually drawing near.*

(*Enter a band of Philistines, pursued by Jonathan and soldiers.*)

JONATHAN.

On, on brave sons of Jacob! In the name
Of Israel's God, pursue the flying foe;
Leave not a remnant of the accursed race
On earth. Press on! The victory is ours. [*Exeunt.*

(*Enter Abner and soldiers, pursued by the enemy.*)

ABNER.

Ye recreant sons of Jacob, halt; stand fast.
'Tis ye should be pursuers, not pursued
By your oft-conquered foe.

[*Exeunt soldiers.*

What fiend of fear
Rules all this day? They flee, and all is lost! [*Exit.*

(*Enter Saul wounded, and armor-bearer.*)

SAUL.

Here will I stand; I can advance no further.
I am sore wounded, pierced with many shafts,
Marked by my greatness for more numerous foes.
Deserted by my people and o'ercome,
The king of Israel has now no friend
But thee. Ascend now yonder eminence,
And tell me how the battle yet goes on.

(*Armor-bearer ascends the hill and looks abroad.*)

ARMOR-BEARER.

O king, it is as if the whole broad plain
Were filled with mad, contending waves, that leap
Against each other, driven on by force
Of unseen tempests. So this swelling sea
Of armèd men rolls now this way, then that,
And finds no stay to its mad course of death.

SAUL.

But how fares Israel?

ARMOR-BEARER.

I see them now,
Borne like the drift before the swollen stream,
Upon this raging sea, tossed, scattered, wrecked,
And overwhelmed.

SAUL.

And is there none to stay
This senseless mass of angry men, and hold
High over all the name of Israel?
Where are my three brave sons? Say not they, too,
Are joined in frenzied flight.

ARMOR-BEARER.

All Israel flee.

SAUL.

Nay! Tell me they are dead!

ARMOR-BEARER.

I see them not.
They surely must have fallen with the slain.

SAUL.

O, worthy sons of Saul! O, royal blood
That cannot flee before the foe, but sinks
Into the earth, and there makes stand as firm
As her broad breast!

ARMOR-BEARER.

O, now I see one who
Withstands alone the whole wild host, a rock
O'er which the mad surge beats in vain. It is—
It is thy son, brave Jonathan.

SAUL.

Look, look
Again. Tell me of his great deeds.

ARMOR-BEARER.

Yea. See!
To right and left he hurls the craven foe,
Even as a lusty swimmer parts the waters,
Or some bold ship, sped on by strong west winds,
Cleaves through the smitten waves dashed from her prow

In scattered spray. But, O, he falls! No! now
Is up, and bolder, mightier than before!
Again he sinks; he's gone! The maddened flood
Rolls on.

SAUL.

O, noble Jonathan! In life,
The image of bright truth; in death, truth's self
Made manifest in glorious deeds. Would that
The house of Saul were all even as thou wert—
And art— (*Shouts without.*)
But soon shall be. I hear the sounds
Of battle. Waves of victory and rout
Come surging on, and death rides on their crest.
Approach. Take thou this sword, rich with the blood
Of heathen lives destroyed by my strong hand;
Draw it and thrust me through. I am thy king;
It is my last command. Obey, lest these
Uncircumcised shall come and thrust me through,
And thus the king of Israel be defiled
By their foul hands. Why tremblest thou? Hast been
So long with me, and fearest to see death!
Obey, and flee; thou mayest yet escape.

ARMOR-BEARER.

My royal master, bid me not do this.
O! bid me slay myself,—and I obey
With joy. (*Kneeling and embracing him.*)
O, first, last king of Israel,
Dear, gracious sovereign, ask me not this,
That my last act to thee may not be one
Of disobedience.

SAUL.

Then rise, dear friend,
I will not longer test thy faithful heart;
Escape, while yet is time. No meaner hand
Than mine shall set my spirit free.

ARMOR-BEARER.

And mine
Shall go with thee.

(*Shouts and sounds of battle drawing nearer.*)

SAUL.

Nay! haste, away!—'Tis come
The supreme moment's come; the moment feared
By all but me. What can it take from me
From whom all earthly power and pride have fled?
In one brief day my crown and kingdom lost;
My sons, and name more dear than life, all lost!
What can it bring to me, whose breast has long
Been strange to human joys and griefs, possessed
By torments known but to the damnéd souls
Beyond the grave? Can death, or its hereafter,
Wake fear in one who hath already met
Every shape conceivable of dread
That either world can conjure up to quell
A human soul? Met and defeated, driven
With curses back to their conspiring powers!
Another world cannot supply more pomps
And pride than I have owned and scorned in this.
Death cannot lead me to a deeper hell
Than that I bear within. Even the God
Of Israel, whose mighty powers are all
Put forth to crush this dust, can but set free

This spark of his own will, that yet, undying,
Hates and defies. (*Battle sounds increase.*)
Hiss on, ye groveling worms,
Blind instruments of wrath divine. Not ye
Have conquered Saul. I scorn ye, spit on ye,
And loathe ye from mine inmost soul.—Come, death,
Thou canst not terrify. Thou art my slave.
Disrobe me of this clogging clay. Let loose
My soul to rush into the spirit world
With challenge to my hidden enemies;
Where, with immortal powers unconquerable,
I shall forever wage unyielding war.

(*Draws his sword.*)

This is the way. Come now, good sword; do quick
Thy work,—blest instrument of victory
O'er all my foes. Rip off this fleshy cloak;
Cut down the bars of sense; open the door
Of freedom; while, as I rush through, I breathe
Defiance on the world.

(*Falls on his sword.*)

Great death, come soon!

ARMOR-BEARER.

O, glorious death! Dear master, thou hast taught
Me how to conquer death. No hour can find
My soul so girded up for his approach,
No place, no instrument, so fit as this.
Most honored blood that thus shall flow with Saul's
Into the earth, which opens to receive it.

(*Falls on his sword and dies.*)

(*The enemy rush in with loud shouts, but suddenly pause upon seeing the bodies of Saul and his servant.*)

*(Enter David and Abishai with soldiers. They fight with the enemy and disperse them.*

DAVID.

Where is the king? On, on, to rescue Saul!

ABISHAI.

Behold, what slain are these? Our countrymen!
Saul's armor-bearer!—Yea, the king himself!
And by his own hand fallen! A priceless gift
To death, by royal hand bestowed! None else
Could touch such death-surviving majesty.

DAVID.

O Saul, my king, my sire! thou'rt fallen, fallen!
Weep, O my soul! The enemies of God
Prevail; the pride of Israel is slain;
The Lord's anointed is no more! Woe! woe
To the house of Jacob! Woe to the seed
Of Abraham!

SAUL.

O, how this vile clay clings
To its departing tenant! Alas! my life
Is yet within me. Draw thou near and slay me.

DAVID.

My father!

SAUL.

David, do I hear thy voice?

DAVID.

Yea, O my father, live.

SAUL.

My son, my son!
Now are the prophet's words fulfilled. I die,
And thou wilt reign. My sons are now with him.

DAVID.

Dear Jonathan?—

SAUL.

He, too, trod down by fate
Inflexible and stern, that goes before
To clear thy way. Man cannot war with God.
Once, young as thou, I heard his guiding voice;
But now its thunders roll along the verge
Of that dark world to which I fly. Fear God,
And live. Now, now my spirit breaks away.
Great seer, I come, I come! With thee—to-day. [*Dies.*

DAVID.

O day of mourning, marked above all days,
Haste to thy end! O sun, descend: O vail
Thy face in clouds! Ye woods and waters, sigh;
Ye tuneful ones, your notes prolong in grief;
Let all that live lament the dead!

(*Enter Abner and Ishbosheth.*)

ABNER.

Behold
King Saul, whom mighty death, that conquers all,
Possesses now. O, who can fill his place?

ISHBOSHETH.

Is not the son of Saul the one most fit
To follow him? Now, Abner, is the time;
Make good thy words. The opportunity,
Cast out from fate's fast-shifting riddle, seized
Upon the fall, is ours; but missed, is lost
Forever.

ABNER.

Is this a time for words? This hour,
Which in its narrow compass holds the fate

Of Israel, calls for men—bold, mighty men.
The people make the king. Now, David, make
Thy league with me. My hand shall be with thee
To bring all Judah unto thee, while I
Rule Israel. Let us divide the land.

DAVID.

Well; I will make a league with thee, but this
I first require of thee; thou shalt not see
My face except thou bring Saul's daughter here.
Deliver me my wife.

ABNER.

It shall be done
According to thy words. [*Exit.*

ISHBOSHETH.

Traitor, thy word
Broken to me thou never shalt make good. [*Exit.*

DAVID.

O Saul, Saul! what a chasm thou hast left
In this rent state, in which all lesser men
Are lost!

(*Enter soldiers.*)

FIRST SOLDIER.

My lord, the men of Jabesh come
Bearing the corse of noble Jonathan.

DAVID.

Blest be the men of Jabesh of the Lord.

(*Enter men of Jabesh bearing the body of Jonathan.*)

How are the mighty fallen!
O, beauty of Israel, slain upon thy high places!

From the blood of the slain,
From the fat of the mighty,
The bow of Jonathan turned not back,
The sword of Saul returned not empty.
O, Saul and Jonathan!
In mutual love united in your lives,
And in your death ye are not divided.
How are the mighty fallen in the midst of the battle!
O Jonathan, slain on thine own mountains!
I am distressed for thee, my brother Jonathan.
Most dear hast thou been unto me.
Thy love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women.
How are the mighty fallen,
And the weapons of war perished!

(*Enter Sarah.*)

SARAH.

My dearest husband, thou art mine at last!
My father and my brother, ye are mine
No more. O, deep and dark decrees of God,
That while they give, remove. My royal sire,
Thy troubled reign is o'er. A subject now,
Thou dwell'st at peace in death's wide, shadowy realm.
My brother, dearest, tenderest of men,
Why must insatiate death embrace thee too?
O, is the blood of Saul so rank to Heaven,
That all it taints must fall? God, if I stand
Between thy will and its accomplishment,
Remove me, too, that David's crown and throne
May be made sure, according to thy word.

DAVID.

Not so, my noble wife, for love hath made
Us one, and one our destiny; e'en though
God's will hath fallen between thy brother's heart
And mine, and death's strong barrier divides.

SARAH.

Thou art my father, brother, country, king,
And crown; and having thee, I have them all
Again.

DAVID.

A nation's honor gives less joy,
Than love of one.

(*Enter messenger.*)

MESSENGER.

Ye men of Judah, lo!
Great Abner is no more.

DAVID.

What sayest thou?

MESSENGER.

Abner is slain. Behold, as he went out
From thee, Ishbosheth took him there aside
To speak with him, and smote him that he died.

DAVID.

Behold! I and my people are without
The guilt of Abner's blood before the Lord.
It rests on him that wrought this deed. The man
Of guile hath fallen in his self-set snare.

(*Enter Rechab and Baanah.*)

ATTENDANT.

The sons of Rimmon, Rechab and Baanah, come.

DAVID.

Let them speak.

RECHAB.

Behold, the son of Saul,
Thine enemy, which sought thy life, is slain.

DAVID.

By whom?

RECHAB.

We have revenged my lord this day
Of Saul, and of his seed.

DAVID.

As God doth live,
Who out of all adversity hath brought
My soul, this day shall I require of you
Ishbosheth's blood. Therefore, shall I not now
Take you away from earth? Young men, lead them
Away to death.

[*Exeunt Rechab and Baanah with guard.*

ELDER OF JUDAH.

Ye men of Judah, see!
The Lord hath now cut off the enemies
Of David, every one, and fulfilled all
His word spoken by mouth of Samuel,
To take the kingdom from the house of Saul,
And to set up the throne of David o'er
The land of Judah and o'er Israel.
Shall we not now assemble all the tribes
To crown him king?

ALL.

All hail to David, king!

DAVID.

God reigns forever o'er the sons of men.
Blest are the people that obey his voice,
And lost the nation that forsakes the Lord.

ELDER.

Now let us go to bury Saul, who feared
Not God; and then anoint great David king,
Who walketh in his law to do his will.

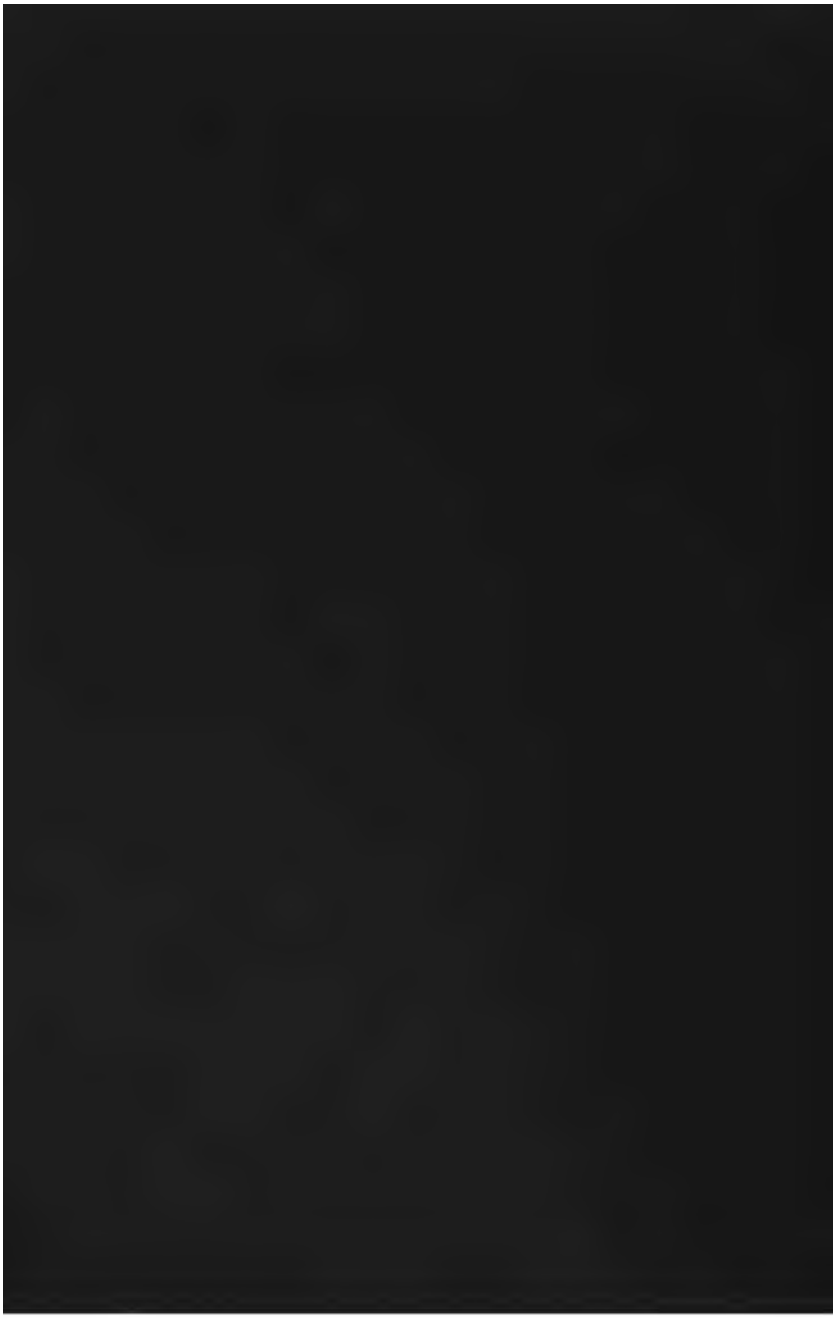
(*The men of Jabesh take up the bodies of Saul and Jonathan, followed by David and Sarah, and all in procession.*)

ALL. (*Chanting.*)

How are the mighty fallen,
And the weapons of war perished!
How are the mighty fallen in the battle!

[*Exeunt omnes.*

THE END.



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